

Study on the Expression of "Ethnicity" in Animated Films with a Mythology Theme from the Perspective of Communication

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Abstract

As a kind of cultural product, the creative process of mythological animated films needs to take into account how to convey the story and cultural elements to the audiences, and therefore needs to be based on the perspective of communication science. The expression of ethnicity is the essence of the creation of animated films, while wide dissemination is the commodity quality of animated films. The exploration of ink and paper-cutting styles, the various expressions of folk cultures, and the designs of characters based on folklore are the ways and means of expressing the "ethnicity" of mythological animated films. The modern and benign transformation of folk tales and the narrative based on Chinese classical symbols are innovative thoughts on the creation of mythological films in the context of communication science..

Keywords

Animated Films; Mythological Animation; Ethnic Cultures; Mythological Cultures.

1. Introduction

Myths are the cultural symbols of a country or nation. Chinese mythology-themed animated films are works produced with traditional Chinese mythological stories as the themes. They usually adopt an elegant narrative style, with traditional dialogues and recitations combined with high art standards, reflecting a strong traditional Chinese cultural flavor. As an important cultural product, mythology-themed animated films can deepen people's knowledge and understanding of national cultures through the presentation, expression, and dissemination of mythological stories.

2. The Relationship Between Communication Studies and the Creation of Mythology-Themed Animated Films

As a cultural product, the creation process of mythological animated films needs to take into account how to convey the story and cultural elements to the audiences, and therefore needs to be based on the perspective of communication science. Communication science provides theories and methods regarding the study of audiences, the analysis of communication methods, and the evaluation of communication effects. These theories and methods can help creators better understand the needs and reactions of audiences, formulate more appropriate creative strategies, and improve the communication effects of their works. In addition, the creation of mythological animated films involves the transmission and expression of national cultures, and their creation also needs to take into account issues such as cultural transmission and cultural identity, and the research results of communication science can also provide useful insights and help with these issues.

2.1. The Expression of Ethnicity: the Creative Essence of Animated Films

The purpose of creating mythology-themed animated films is to convey cultural elements to the audience, and these cultural elements are often related to the cultures of countries and nations. As a cultural symbol of a country and nation, mythology has a high degree of representativeness and symbolism, so the expression of ethnicity is very significant in mythology-themed animated films.

Firstly, the expression of ethnicity can reflect the cultural connotation and value of mythology-themed animated films. As a traditional culture, myths contain profound philosophical, religious, and ethical ideas and concepts, which are the cultural heritage of the country and the nation, and are also the contents that mythology-themed animated films aim to convey and express. By depicting and interpreting mythological stories and cultural elements, the audience can gain a deeper understanding and knowledge of their own cultures and nationality. Secondly, the expression of ethnicity can enhance the attractiveness of mythological animation films. As a kind of animated film, mythological animated films need to have good visual effects and artistic expression, and in this regard, ethnic expression can provide creators with rich creative materials and expression techniques. For example, characters, scenes, costumes, architecture, and other elements from mythology can be creatively used in animated films, thus enhancing the visual effect and appeal of the works. Finally, the expression of ethnicity can enhance the cultural identity and communication effect of mythology-themed animated films. As a cultural product, the creation of mythology-themed animated films aims not only to convey cultural connotations and values but also to enhance the cultural identity and self-awareness of the audiences. Through the expression and transmission of national cultures, the audience's identification and pride in their own national culture can be enhanced, thus improving the communication effect and cultural influence of works.

The expression of ethnicity is the essence of the creation of mythological animated films, which reflects the cultural connotation and values of the works, enhances the ornamental quality and attractiveness of the works, and improves the cultural identity and spreading effect of the works. Therefore, in the process of creating mythological animation films, the creators must give adequate consideration to the expression of ethnicity in the images.

2.2. The Widespread Dissemination: the Commodity Quality of Animated Films

The creation of mythological animated films cannot be separated from widespread dissemination, as dissemination is a key part of presenting a work to an audience and making it accessible and understandable to them. In order to ensure that the work achieves the expected results in the process of dissemination, the creators must take into account wide dissemination, which means creators must consider how to make the work reach and spread to the widest possible audience in the best possible way. In the creation of mythological animated films, considering whether the films can be disseminated or not, is very significant, which is closely related to two aspects: on the one hand, the dissemination of national cultures; and on the other hand, the commercial nature of the films.

Firstly, as a kind of vehicle, mythological animated films carry the inheritance and development of national cultures. Only through wide dissemination can more audiences understand, accept and love these cultural elements, and thus better inherit and develop the national cultures. Take *The Monkey King* as an example, this animated film was created in the 1980s at the beginning of the development of the Chinese cultural industry, and it brought Chinese fairy tales to the big screen, becoming an important milestone in the development of Chinese animated films. The film was created with an emphasis on storyline and characterization, making it not only strongly culturally quality but also internationally recognized and acclaimed. This wide distribution has not only contributed to the heritage and development of Chinese mythology

and culture but has also helped Chinese animated films to gain some influence in the international market.

On the other hand, the wide distribution of a film is also closely linked to commercial success. It is only through wide distribution that a film can attract a wider audience and thus achieve commercial success. Take *Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child* as an example, the film was produced with a focus on commercial benefits, not only by incorporating more commercial elements into the storyline but also by investing a lot of resources in marketing and promotion. Through wide distribution, the film received very high box office and acclaim, becoming a dark horse in the Chinese animated film market. This commercial success not only brought financial gains to the creators but also provided more opportunities and resources for the development of the Chinese animated film industry.

Therefore, in the process of creating mythological animated films, considering whether the film can be disseminated is a factor that must be taken into account, which is related to both the dissemination of national culture and commerciality. Only with widespread dissemination can the film have a wider social impact and at the same time achieve commercial success.

3. The Expression of "Ethnicity" in Mythological Animation films

The expression of "ethnicity" in mythological animated films is very essential, as it is a way of conveying and presenting traditional Chinese cultures, as well as a way of highlighting the characteristics and uniqueness of Chinese culture. In the age of globalization, mythological animated films can provide the world with a more diverse cultural experience, as well as a way of promoting Chinese cultures and values.

3.1. The Exploration of the Ink and Paper-cutting Styles

The ink and paper-cutting styles are important expressions of traditional Chinese cultures and have a natural connection with Chinese myths. Through the use of ink and paper-cutting techniques, the mysterious and ancient situations and images in myths could be better expressed, making the films more distinctive and charming. In addition, the use of them could also bring about higher production efficiency and lower production costs. Compared to traditional animation methods, ink, and paper-cutting can produce Chinese-style images more quickly and at a lower cost, which is also conducive to the marketing and commercialization of Chinese mythology animation films. Therefore, the exploration of the ink and paper-cut styles is an important means of expressing the "ethnicity" of mythological animated films.

Big Fish Begonia is a mythological animated film co-directed by Chinese directors Liang Xuan and Zhang Chun. The film uses a unique ink and wash style to bring out the fantastical atmosphere of the mythical world through the ink lines and gradient color tones in the pictures. At the same time, "*Big Fish Begonia*" also incorporates modern film technology, such as 3D modeling and CGI, to make the images more realistic and vivid. *The Little God of Doors* is an animated film with a mythological theme directed by the famous Chinese director Han Yan. The film adopts a paper-cutting style, combining the traditional art of paper-cutting with modern animated techniques. The mystery of the world of myth and the charm of traditional cultures are brought to the screen through the flat composition and vibrant colors of the paper cuttings. Also, the characters in *The Little God of Doors* are very distinctive, using Chinese costumes and images from folklore to show the uniqueness and charm of Chinese culture.

The creative exploration of these films is both the continuation and innovation of traditional cultures and the incorporation of cultural images with Chinese characteristics, highlighting the unique charm and values of Chinese mythology-themed animated films. Overall, Chinese mythology-themed animated films have not only continued the charm of traditional cultures in their exploration of ink and paper-cutting styles but also have injected modern creative and

technical elements, presenting audiences with a mythical world full of imagination. At the same time, these films have also become important representatives of Chinese culture, and are of great significance in promoting the development of Chinese animated films and passing on Chinese cultures.

3.2. The Diversity of Expression of Folk Cultures

Folk cultures are the local cultures of a country or region, which are historical, realistic, tangible, intangible, living, creative, traditional, and innovative. In the creation of Chinese mythological animation films, folk cultures also occupy a very important position.

First of all, the stories and characters of Chinese mythology-themed animated films are often derived from traditional Chinese folklore, so folklore cultures are indispensable for Chinese mythology-themed animated films. For example, the Chinese mythological stories "Chang'e Runs to the Moon", "The Cowherd and the Weaving Maiden" and "The Legend of the White Snake" are all stories with strong folklore cultures, and these stories have become important creative materials for Chinese mythology-themed animated films. Secondly, folk culture also provides a wide creative space and rich creative elements for Chinese mythology-themed animation films. China's folk culture is very diverse, with various festivals, folk arts, and folk tales, all of which can provide rich creative materials and means of expression for Chinese mythological animation films. For example, in the film *Big Fish Begonia*, traditional Chinese folk elements, such as Peking Opera faces, embroidered balls, and lanterns, are expressed in the form of ink paintings. And at the same time, traditional Chinese folk festival elements, such as Mid-Autumn Festival and Spring Festival, are also incorporated, adding more folk culture elements to the film and making it more Chinese in character. Finally, folk cultures can also provide a better boost to the dissemination of Chinese mythology-themed animated films. As folk culture is folkloric, inherited and popular, Chinese mythology-themed animated films can better resonate with the audience, and thus be more easily accepted and loved by the general audience through the expression of folk culture. For example, the film *Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child* was a recreation of the traditional Chinese folklore story of "Nezha Conquers the Dragon King", which created a deep emotional resonance for the character of Nezha and became the top-grossing film in mainland China in 2019.

In conclusion, Chinese mythological animated films are diverse in their representation of folk cultures, and through the excavation and integration of folk culture from different regions, they can show the richness of Chinese folk cultures, enriching the cultural connotation of Chinese mythological animated films and making them more attractive and enjoyable at the same time.

3.3. The Character Design Based on the Folklore

In Chinese mythology animated films, character design based on folklore is very important and is an important way to express the ethnicity of the films, which not only reflects Chinese folklore and culture but also attracts the attention and emotional resonance of the audience, thus enhancing the film's communication and influence. The image designs of these folk characters usually take into account their historical origins, characteristics, and characterization, thus making these characters more three-dimensional, vivid, and personalized.

A very typical folk character is the Chinese mythological Hulu Boy. In the animated film "The Hulu Brothers", the design of the Hulu boy characters is very much in line with folklore, such as the Hulu boys possessing special abilities such as the seven-colored divine lights, the indestructible body, and the clairvoyant eyes and ears, which are all based on folk tales and legends. At the same time, the personalities of the Hulu boys are also well represented, such as bravery and justice, naughtiness and wit, and cleverness, all of which are in line with the folklore images of the Hulu boys.

The design of characters drawn from folklore is one of the most important means to successfully create an ethnic identity in Chinese mythological animated films. Through the use of rich Chinese folk cultural resources, animated filmmakers can incorporate traditional Chinese cultural elements into the design of their characters, thus expressing a strong Chinese style in their visual images. At the same time, the images and cultural symbols represented by these characters can also resonate with the audience, enhancing the film's cultural identity and viewing experience.

4. The Creative Thinking of Films on Mythological Subjects under the Semantics of Communicating Science

The creative thinking of mythological film creation under the semantics of communication is very important because, with the development of society and the changing needs of the audience, film creation also needs to be constantly innovated and updated. In the creation of mythological films, creative thinking in the context of communication semantics can help creators to better attract the attention of audiences while presenting mythological stories, enhancing the artistic and commercial aspects of the films, and realizing the purpose of communication.

4.1. The Modern and Benign Transformation of National Stories

In the creation of mythological animated films, ethnic stories are very important creative elements. However, these ancient stories and legends need to be combined with the context of the times in order to better convey the cultural messages and values expected by modern audiences.

Taking *Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child* as an example, the film presents a modern China with a multicultural background. Through a transformative representation of mythology, traditional cultures are combined with contemporary values to form richer and more meaningful content. The images of Nezha in the film are deconstructed and reinterpreted to be more in tune with the aesthetics and values of contemporary audiences while retaining the mythological elements of traditional culture. For example, Nezha is no longer portrayed as a child in the traditional sense, but with the hair and clothing of the modern age; at the same time, Nezha's parents are given a more emotionally rich and humanized image, allowing the audience to more easily empathize and emotionally connect with the characters.

Therefore, it is very important for the national stories in mythological animated films to be transformed and expressed in the context of the times. Only if they are transformed and presented in a modern context can they better convey the values and spiritual connotations of ancient cultures and meet the aesthetic expectations of modern audiences.

4.2. The Narrative Based on the Classical Chinese Codes

The reason why the national stories in mythological animated films should be based on classic Chinese symbolic narratives is that they can better convey the cultural connotations and values of the Chinese nation, allowing audiences to better understand Chinese cultures and enhance their sense of identity with traditional Chinese cultures.

For example, *Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child* is also an animated film based on Chinese mythology and legend. In the film, the character of Nezha has been innovated, but the storyline and symbolic narrative are close to traditional Chinese cultures, such as the immortal bird and the dragons, blending national cultures with contemporary art, giving the film a deeper cultural connotation and modern significance.

Therefore, mythology-themed animated films should be based on the classic Chinese symbolic narrative, in order to reflect traditional Chinese cultures in the storyline and symbolic narrative,

so as to better express the unique charm of Chinese culture and attract the audience's attention, as well as to convey a more profound cultural connotation and humanistic spirits for the audience.

4.3. The Deeper Meanings Hidden in Ethnic Symbols

In Chinese mythological animation films, exploring the deeper meanings behind ethnic symbols can make the stories more colorful and better convey the connotations of ethnic cultures. For example, in the film "Big Fish and Begonia", the symbols represented by "Big Fish" and "Begonia" have a strong symbolic meaning. In Chinese culture, the "big fish" often symbolizes strength, freedom, and freedom, while the "begonia" symbolizes fleeting beauty and the passing of youth. The film incorporates these symbols deeply into the storyline and characterization, creating a visceral visual and emotional world. By exploring the deeper meanings of these symbols, the film conveys profound thoughts and insights about life and love to the audience.

Likewise, the film "Jiang Ziya" fully explores the deeper meaning of classic Chinese symbols. The "demon" in the film symbolizes greed, evil, and injustice, while "Jiang Ziya" represents justice, courage, and wisdom. Through the use and in-depth interpretation of these symbols, the film presents an epic story full of connotations and profound reflections.

In conclusion, exploring the deeper meanings behind the national symbols in Chinese mythology-themed animated films can make the stories more vivid, rich, and profound, and better convey the cultural essence and values of the Chinese nation.

5. Conclusion

When an animated film with mythological themes is disseminated, it conveys not only the film itself but also the cultures and values behind the film. Therefore, the ethnic expression of mythological animated films is of great significance to the transmission and promotion of cultures. Traditional Chinese cultures and myths are highly known and influential among domestic and international audiences, and the incorporation of these elements into animated films allows audiences to feel the uniqueness and heritage of their own cultures, thus creating a sense of identity and belonging, which in turn promotes emotional investment and cognitive depth in the films. Secondly, the expression of ethnicity can also give the film a unique visual and emotional charm. Through symbolic expressions, diverse artistic techniques, and unique character images, it allows the audience to feel a different imaginary space and aesthetic experience from real life, which in turn generates interest and attraction. Therefore, the creation of mythological animation films must be based on "ethnicity" and find a communication perspective.

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