



The Interpretation and Reconstruction of Chinese Traditional Cultural Elements in Contemporary Domestic Animated Movies

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Abstract. The release of “Monkey King: Hero is Back” in 2015 not only broke the box office record of Chinese domestic animated movies, but also sounded the horn of the “return” of domestic animated movies. Adhering to interpreting traditional cultural elements is an important concept in creating domestic animation movies. And is also one of the important reasons domestic animation movies have broken the doldrums and successfully entered the prosperity period in recent years. Contemporary domestic animation movies visually reproduce and creatively adapt to traditional cultural elements. It injects traditional cultural elements from the perspective of characters, scenes and themes, and recreate traditional cultural elements under the cross-border integration of art and technology, so that they are closely related to the spirit and cultural connotation of contemporary times and form animation movies with great Chinese cultural characteristics. Also, contemporary Chinese animation movies are innovative and recreate tradition. While discovering and reproducing Chinese traditional cultural elements and spreading excellent traditional culture, it also has great significance to the development of contemporary domestic animation movies.

Keywords: Chinese domestic animation · movie · traditional cultural elements · animation adaptation

1 Introduction

With the ‘digital development’ and “globalization process” accelerating and deepening, Chinese domestic animation movies present a new development trend. Which manifests in its creation theme and expression method are broadened. In recent years, domestic animation movies are no longer bound to imitate the creative methods of foreign animation, but to pursue the “localization” of its themes and scenes. It can be interpreted as they were created based on traditional Chinese culture, utilizing the traditional Chinese cultural elements to derive various styles of creation and imagination. It is opening a new era of animation movies with Chinese characteristics.

“Monkey King: Hero is Back”, a movie released in July 2015, is regarded as a milestone in the development of Chinese animated movies and it broke the box office record of domestic animated movies. So that, for a long time in a dormant state of domestic

animation movies rises again, and also lets the audience rekindle hope for domestic animation. Since then, “Big Fish & Begonia”, “White Snake (2019)”, “Nezha (2019)”, “I Am What I Am” and many other Chinese domestic animation movies have achieved good results at the box office and word of mouth. Based on traditional Chinese culture and integrated with digital technology, these domestic animated movies combine traditional cultural elements with sophisticated post-production to give audiences multiple experiences in visual, aesthetic, and spiritual aspects. It is a successful attempt on the road to development of Chinese domestic animated movies.

This paper selects nine theatrical movies with a Douban rating of over 7 between 2015 and 2022, and examines the presentation and innovation of Chinese traditional culture in contemporary Chinese animation movies from three perspectives: character, scene and idea. The name of these movies are: “Monkey King: Hero is Back”, “Big Fish & Begonia”, “White Snake” 1&2, “Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child”, “Legend of Deification”, “I Am What I Am”, “The Legend of Yang Jian”, “Goodbye Monster”.

Chinese traditional culture evolved and gathered from Chinese civilization, and it reflects the characteristics and style of the Chinese nation (Zhao Yue, 2012).¹ In recent years, the use of Chinese traditional culture in domestic animation movies has become a hot topic in the academic field, and various scholars have conducted case studies from a specific movie to analyze the use and presentation of traditional cultural elements in animation works. For example, Xiaoxuan Tian and Yanzhi Zhang chose “White Snake” for a case study to explore the presentation of traditional Chinese cultural elements in the movie and its impact on the Chinese domestic movie industry (Tian, Xiaoxuan & Zhang, Yanzhi 2021).² Differently, Chong Chen chose “Big Fish & Begonia” as the research object to explore Chinese cultural elements from four aspects: the movie’s thematic design, character design, scene design, and color design, to find the necessary way to revitalize domestic animation with Chinese cultural characteristics (Chen, Chong 2016).³

This paper tries to analyze the interpretation and reconstruction of Chinese traditional cultural elements in domestic animation movies, and to further explore the way to integrate Chinese traditional cultural elements with domestic animation movies. This paper will dig from three directions: animation characters, animation scenes and animation themes, and focusing on five domestic animation works with high popularity between 2015 and 2021.

¹ Zhao Y. (2012) Taking Chinese Art as Chinese Teaching Method in Thailand, Guangxi University.

² Tian X X, Zhang Y Z. (2021) The Presentation of Traditional Chinese Cultural Elements and the Innovation of the Times from “White Snake: The Origin”, China Film News, (29): 013.

³ Chen C. (2016) Analysis of the Use of Chinese Traditional Cultural Elements in Animated Films--Take “Big Fish Begonia” as an Example, View on Publishing, (22):66–68.

2 Interpretation and Reconstruction of Traditional Cultural Elements in Animation Characters

2.1 Traditional Literature: The Source of Animation Characters

In the past decade, many popular domestic animated movies are based on ancient Chinese literature. The narrative and creation of stories are starting based on the characters in the literature as the main characters in the movie.⁴ For example, in “Monkey King: Hero is Back”, the images of Wukong and the young monk Liuer Jiang are taken from the traditional mythological story “Journey to the West”. In the original story, the “more bark than bite” image of Wukong is deeply rooted in people’s hearts, and the movie also inherits this character image. It portrays Wukong’s character characteristics of “sharp-tongued but tender-hearted” vividly. In addition, young monk Liuer’s nagging, kind-hearted image is the same as the origin of the character in the “Journey to the West”.

In “The Big Fish & Begonia”, the heroine resurrects the human boy into a big fish Kun to repay her kindness, and the image of Kun comes from the ancient Chinese literature “A Happy Excursion”. The movie is a perfect reproduction of the image of the Kun described by Zhuangzi in “A Happy Excursion” - “In the northern ocean there is a fish, called the Kun, I do not know how many thousand li in size. This Kun changes into a bird, called the Peng. Its back is I do not know how many thousand li in breadth. When it is moved, it flies, its wings obscuring the sky like clouds”. The image of the heroine Chun, who is in charge of all blossoming of the ocean and can give birth to all things, is also corresponding to in “A Happy Excursion”. In the original text, Chun is described as a long-lived tree in the ancient times, which “there was a large tree which had a spring and autumn each of eight thousand years”. Other than them, the images of Tu Hou and Rong Zhu, who are chasing the hero, are the beasts in “The Classic of Mountains and Seas”.

In addition, animated movies based on characters and stories from China’s ancient mythological novel “The Investiture of the Gods” include “Nezha” and “Legend of Deification”; the characters and story background in “The Legend of Yang Jian” are based on the Chinese Qing Dynasty folklore “Yang Jian Saves His Mother” and “Lotus Lantern” (also known as “Splitting Mountain to Save His Mother”); “White Snake 1 & 2” is based on the ancient Chinese folklore Legend of the White Snake; the characters of “Goodbye Monster” are taken from “The Classic of Mountains and Seas”, and the main character is “Shirasawa”, a rare beast in the Mountain and Sea Sutra, with a “horn green hair dragon head” is recovered in the movie. The supporting characters are also other beasts in “The Classic of Mountains and Seas”, such as the four elders of the medical school image of the four divine beasts “Black Tortoise, Vermilion Bird, White Tiger, Azure Dragon”. Contemporary domestic animation movie creators based on localization, finding inspiration and material in the traditional literature. These will be presented in front of the audience as digital movies, and create high-quality animation movies to promote Chinese traditional culture.

⁴ Zhang S Y, Xi Y Q. (2021) The presentation and interpretation of traditional cultural symbols in contemporary domestic animation, China Film News, 12-08(011).

2.2 Anti-heroization: The Reshaping of Characters

The characters are the core of movies, the image and background of the characters determine the story process of the movie, influencing the audience's experience and emotion. Most of the main characters of contemporary Chinese domestic animation movies are based on the characters in traditional literary works, and indicate the growing process with inner emotional transformation of the characters in the mode of "hero's journey".⁵ At the same time, the thoughts of the creator are also incorporated into it. This allows the audience to experience the spirit of national culture and the values of the times, while watching the transformation of the characters and accompanying the growth of the main character quietly. In the original "Journey to the West", the Tang Sanzang initially appears in the readers' perspective as a pious and compassionate, mature image with profound cultivation, profound moral conduct, firm will and kind heart. And in the animated movie "Monkey King: Hero is Back", Tang Sanzang was depicted as an infantile character. Although he sometimes became confused and occasionally made mistakes like a loafer. However, when the mountain demon came, he could take the initiative to protect the little girl in the crisis moment, so that she would not fall into the sacrifice of the demon. And he accompanied Sun Wukong all the way to eliminate the demon and protect the weak. Eventually, he chose to sacrifice himself to protect his companies and the people.

Compared with the original image of the saintly Tang Sanzang, the young Monk Jiang Liuer in "Monkey King: Hero is Back" is brave all the way. He sometimes makes mistakes, but is full of love all the time. Such a childish image has more ordinary human nature, allowing the audience to appreciate the growth of the main character. Also, the values contained behind are more in line with contemporary thinking. The image of the Sun Wukong in the movie also presents a large difference from the original. Sun Wukong in the movie "Monkey King: Hero is Back" experienced five hundred years of oppression, which made him lonely and frustrated, so he lost the spirit from Uproar in Heaven. The powerlessness of not being able to defeat the mountain demon beats him, making Sun Wukong become a passive, decrepit weakling who cannot withstand defeat. Until the last moment of the movie, Sun Wukong realized his life mission after seeing the sacrifice of Jiang Liuer, and finally completed the transformation from Sun Wukong to the Monkey King. The "King is Back" no longer promotes individual heroism, but gives the heroic character to the image of an ordinary person. In the movie, Sun Wukong is also like an ordinary person who experienced failure and faced setbacks. It is easier to trigger the emotional resonance of the audience.

The image of Nezha in "Nezha's Demon Boy Descending" is artistically created from the original. Nezha's dark eyes and neat, huge teeth fit the movie's cynical image of the Demon Pill. Unlike the original, Nezha in the animated movie has a harmonious family atmosphere. He has a pair of loving parents and a funny teacher. This is the reason although he accidentally becomes the reincarnation of Demon Pill and is supposed to go on a killing spree on the day of his birth feast, but ends up sacrificing himself to save the people. Without bowing to fate, he uses his own efforts to get rid of the world's

⁵ Zhang S Y, Xi Y Q. (2021) The presentation and interpretation of traditional cultural symbols in contemporary domestic animation, *China Film News*, 12-08(011).

prejudice and his own existential dilemma, and he eventually becomes a heroic figure in the hearts of the people. Such values are consistent with the core of modern thought and can move contemporary audiences more.

In addition, while retaining the bravery of “LEGEND OF DEIFICATION” in “Investiture of the Gods”, the movie has changed his image of being a good planner to that of a tall, decrepit, hands-on, but mellow older man. The film’s portrayal of Legend of Deification is more mundane and complex than in the original text, and his situation is more likely to evoke emotion and empathy from the contemporary generation of the underprivileged. Yang Jian, the protagonist of “The Legend of Yang Jian”, is also portrayed differently than in the text, no longer as an unattainable god of war, but as a humorous, melancholy figure of the public. Many of these characters have strong character traits and even flaws, and are both divine and human at the same time. Such character settings make the image of the main character more relevant to the masses, making it easier for the audience to identify with the values and emotional resonance in watching the growth and transformation of the movie’s main character.

3 Interpretation and Reconstruction of Traditional Cultural Elements in Animation Scenes

3.1 Scene Design: Traditional Painting and Architecture

Most contemporary domestic animation film opening or finishing scenes are in traditional Chinese painting forms. For example, the title of “Big Fish & Begonia” is a Chinese painting scene, creating a serene and dynamic atmosphere.⁶ It is worth mentioning that the film’s creator uses the Preface and PostScript form as a carrier to introduce the director, producer and other related personnel of the movie, combining Chinese painting elements and restoring the Chinese painting style. Ink painting is a traditional form of painting in China, which emphasizes “vividness and vitality” and “depicting the spirit through form”. The beginning of “White Snake (2019)” uses the element of brush and ink to outline the character with a few strokes, and the heroine sinks into the water with the ink. The brush and ink halo in the water to reveal the clear image of the heroine. Besides the beginning and end of the movie, the scene design of contemporary Chinese animation is also full of Chinese painting elements, spirit, and rhyme. In “Monkey King: Hero is Back”, “White Snake 1 & 2”, “Legend of Deification”, “The Legend of Yang Jian”, “Goodbye Monster” and other animations, all draw on Chinese landscape ink painting symbols in their scene design. Among them, the creators of “The Legend of Yang Jian” presented the Taiji diagram to the audience as ink painting and restored the texture of Xuan paper, giving the audience a rich visual experience.

Traditional architecture is an inherited building with the traditions and characteristics of a region and nation, and is an integral part of traditional Chinese culture. The scene design of contemporary domestic animated films is often based on real traditional buildings, which are artistically processed using digital technology to make the overall atmosphere of the film more Chinese and oriental.

⁶ Zhang S Y, Xi Y Q. (2021) The presentation and interpretation of traditional cultural symbols in contemporary domestic animation, China Film News, 12-08(011).

The prototype of the place where the heroine Chun and her clan live in “Big Fish & Begonia” is the Yongding Tulou in Longyan, which unites the culture of the Hak family and symbolizes reunion. As shown in the movie, the people of the main female clan live in unity and work hard to protect the clan for generations. Chun chooses to sacrifice her own life to protect the clan as well. The living characteristics of the Hakka Tulou living together and the national cohesion presented in the scenes complement each other, making the scene design and characterization of the film achieve high unity. Movie “White Snake (2019)” draws on the features of Song Dynasty pagoda architecture to restore the beautiful sunset scene of the Leifeng Pagoda in real life, creating a romantic atmosphere for the film. Scenes design in “The Legend of Yang Jian” are based on the architecture and scenery of Dunhuang, combining the visual style of the Wei and Jin dynasties with the architectural elements of the Qin and Han dynasties to create a fantastical Chinese style. In addition, the dance in the film refers to the Dunhuang flying frescoes, restoring the beautiful figures in the frescoes and beautiful dance movements, so that the audience can experience the charm of traditional Chinese architectural art at the same time as visual enjoyment.

3.2 Technological Innovation: The Integration of Scientific and Technological Elements

Contemporary domestic animation movies have inherited the traditional Chinese culture and also digitized it.⁷ Contemporary domestic animation takes Chinese traditional culture as the background of creation, which brings beautiful aesthetic experience and spiritual enjoyment to the contemporary audience. At the same time, the development of digital technology has brought new opportunities for contemporary domestic animation, presenting traditional Chinese cultural elements in front of the audience in an artistic form, making the audience feel as if they were in an animated scene, and more realistically feel the charm of traditional culture.

“Nezha” uses Chinese painting symbols while adding modern technological elements. The film is a restoration of the “Cosmo Matrix Paint” from “The Legend of the Gods”, in which Taiyi immortal waved his pen in front of Nezha, and a subtle Chinese painting came into view. With the development of digital technology, the use of Chinese landscape painting elements in the film is no longer limited to the two-dimensional world. In the film, Taiyi immortal takes Nezha on a journey through the world of “Cosmo Matrix Paint”,⁸ where the elements of a flat Chinese painting come to life in three dimensions, bringing a new aesthetic experience of Chinese landscape painting to the audience.

The animation rendering technology brings the scenes described in words in traditional literature to the viewers’ eyes realistically. For example, at the end of “Nezha”, when Ao Bing attempts to bury the people alive, the heaven and earth darken for a moment, and Nezha and Ao Bing begin their final showdown, with Ao Bing’s water colliding with Nezha’s fire, presenting a world of ice as fire. This image is presented in the

⁷ Su W J, Huang Y D. (2021) The Current Path of Using Chinese Traditional Cultural Elements in Domestic Animation Films, *Contemporary Animation*, (04):70-77

⁸ Zhang S Y, Xi Y Q. (2021) The presentation and interpretation of traditional cultural symbols in contemporary domestic animation, *China Film News*, 12-08(011).

animation rendering technology, vividly presented in front of the audience, bringing the audience an extremely stunning visual effect. The soundtrack of “White Snake (2019)” incorporates electronic music elements based on ancient music, and its background music is more modern and technological while conforming to the traditional cultural connotation of the film, so that the audience can achieve both visual and auditory enjoyment. Based on incorporating Chinese landscape painting and traditional architecture, the scenes of contemporary domestic animation films make use of digital technologies such as VR, 3D and animation rendering to make them more technological, bringing the audience a visual and aesthetic experience with a sense of history and modernity.

4 Interpretation and Reconstruction of Traditional Cultural Elements in the Theme of Animation

4.1 Dramatic Conflict: The Collision and Integration of Confucian and Taoist Cultures

Confucianism attaches great importance to self-cultivation and requires people to follow certain social rules, while Taoism advocates the idea of inaction and encourages people to pursue spiritual freedom, with its cultural connotation of being an escapist and a free spirit. Confucianism’s idea of “entering the world (transcendental)” and Taoism’s idea of “leaving the world (mundane)” also collide fiercely in Chinese animation films. The heroine of “Big Fish & Begonia”, Chun, lives in a clan with a Confucian culture, and the people of the clan have been defending their relatives and village for generations. Faced with the pressure from her clan, Chun does not compromise, but stays true to her inner feelings and insists on repaying her kindness and bringing up Kun. Although Chun paid with her life at the end to make up for the harm she has caused to her clan’s relatives, her strong and brave image of resistance provokes the audience to think about their self-worth and traditional values.

In “Monkey King: Hero is Back”, because of five hundred years of loneliness and suffering and negative decadence, Wukong thought he could do nothing to save the people in this world when he first met the young Tang monk Jiang Liuer. Especially after the failure of the battle with the mountain demon. That was a devastation. He was even reluctant to save a little girl. At this moment, Wukong is obeying Taoist thought of not doing anything. He was following his own inner choice and pursuing the freedom of the mind. But Jiang Liuer’s company changed him, Wukong tried to help the people as much as he could, and at the end of the film, Jiang Liuer sacrificed himself to convert Wukong to Monkey King, so that he transformed into the Monkey King and returned to glory. In the movie, Jiang Liuer protects the little girl and the people at all times, and his Confucian ideology of putting the collective interest continues to influence Wukong, making him transform to take up his former mission again.

4.2 The New Family Concept: The Change and Return of Confucian Culture

The relationship between Nezha and Li Jing at the beginning of “Nezha” is characterized by a deeper conflict between father and son, as presented in the original “Investiture

of the God”. And this conflict is made more apparent by the dramatic effects, which differ from the concept of “harmony family” promoted by traditional Chinese culture.⁹ Confucianism advocates loyalty and filial piety, believing that the body’s hair and skin are given to and by parents.

In “Nezha”, Li Jing, Nezha’s father would like to trade his life for a life to save Nezha from the calamity in heaven. It is clear that Li Jing’s act of suffering for his son is contrary to the traditional Chinese concept of “the son must pay his father’s debts.” In the movie *Nezha*, the father-son relationship between Li Jing and Nezha comes to harmony, completing a complete kinship. When Nezha discovers his father is trying to sacrifice himself to save his life, he tears up the amulet and decides to suffer the coming cataclysm himself. While trying to bury Chen Tangguan alive, he defends his parents and the people to the death. The “loyalty and filial piety” and “collective interest” advocated by Confucianism return at the end of the movie, along with the image of Nezha as a hero.

In “I Am What I Am”, the main character is about to realize his dream of becoming a lion, but then he encounters a family change and his father is injured. So he has to quit his dream and take up the responsibility of caring for his family. The collision of ethics and morality with personal dreams makes the plot take a sharp turn, causing changes in the fate and relationships of the characters and arousing the emotions of the audience. In the end, the main character’s performance in the lion & dragon dance competition awakens his father, and the combination of Confucian family ethics and the Taoist pursuit of self merge was completed after a collision. The movie also shows the change from the traditional family concept of “father’s kindness and son’s filial piety” to the new family concept of “mutual support and achievement between individual and family”. Contemporary domestic animation movies need to combine traditional Chinese culture with contemporary values while using it as a story carrier to show the audience’s familiar context and emotions. The two eras are connected in the collision: traditional cultural thought with modern thought. And the spiritual connotations of people in the two eras are intermingled in the change and return of traditional thought.

5 The Contemporary Inspiration of Chinese Domestic Animation Using Traditional Cultural Elements

5.1 Combining Tradition: Digging Deeper into Various Cultural Elements

Using traditional Chinese culture as the creative material makes domestic animation movies nationalized and localized. While triggering the cultural identity and emotional resonance of Chinese audiences, it also spreads excellent Chinese culture overseas. In recent years, the problem of using Chinese traditional cultural elements in domestic animation films is reflected because the materials are taken from traditional literature, so the sources of the materials are single.¹⁰

⁹ Cui C Y, Dai R, Luo R X, Diao C Y. (2021) Research on the Integration of Chinese Traditional Cultural Elements into Game Design. *Packaging Engineering*, (22):33–39

¹⁰ Su W J, Huang Y D. (2021) The Current Path of Using Chinese Traditional Cultural Elements in Domestic Animation Films, *Contemporary Animation*, (04):70-77.

Among the nine domestic animated films studied in this paper, eight of them have characters and story settings derived from traditional Chinese literature such as folk myths and legends and classical books, including “Monkey King: Hero is Back”, “Big Fish & Begonia”, “White Snake” 1&2, “Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child”, “Legend of Deification”, “I Am What I Am”, “The Legend of Yang Jian”, “Goodbye Monster”. Moreover, “I am What I am” is based on the lion & dragon dance, which is an intangible cultural heritage of China. While indicating the personal identity of the main character, the film also shows the charm of China’s folk culture and intangible cultural heritage with subtle realistic images.

Besides the sources of the selected materials, this paper also counts the traditional cultural elements used and borrowed in the above nine Chinese domestic animation films (e.g. Table 1), the interpretation and reconstruction of these Chinese traditional cultural elements are the core of the films with national style and Chinese characteristics, which enhance the artistic influence and spiritual connotation of domestic animation. However, contemporary Chinese animation films are still shallow in their excavation of traditional Chinese cultural elements, which can be said it’s just the tip of the iceberg. Traditional Chinese culture features a long and rich history. It has a wide variety of content and deserves more film creators to dig deeper.

5.2 Innovative Narrative: Building Heroes Based on Traditional Culture

In recent years, Chinese domestic animation movies have made certain achievements, but the creators of them still have a long way to go on how to present Chinese images, how to tell Chinese stories and how to spread Chinese ideas by using Chinese traditional cultural elements. Based on the analysis of the story background and character design of the nine Chinese domestic animation movies studied in this paper, it can be found that most of the contemporary domestic animation creative teams take Chinese traditional culture as the basis in the process of film creation, and add more grounded character traits and behavioral habits to the characters based on preserving the traditional image of the main character. The innovation of characterization makes it easier for the audience to achieve self-representation and create emotional resonance in witnessing the growth of the protagonist. However, this paper finds that although the movie’s protagonists are drawn from different traditional literature and have different personalities and story backgrounds, the creative path of the film’s creators is the same, which can be summarized as creating a growth-oriented hero based on traditional culture and seeking expressions in line with the spirit of the times. Although these films have a common creative path, demonstrating a workable path for newcomers, there are still problems that need to be solved. For example, to figure out how to avoid audience aesthetic fatigue and open up new expression themes in diverse traditional culture. The development of domestic animation films also needs more animation creators to devote their enthusiasm and choose different traditional cultural backgrounds and elements for creation. Producers can take advantage of China’s deep traditional cultural heritage to choose more innovative creative themes as well as adopt more artistic expressions.¹¹ In the future, there will be

¹¹ Zhang S Y, Xi Y Q. (2021) The presentation and interpretation of traditional cultural symbols in contemporary domestic animation, China Film News, 12-08(011).

Table 1. The traditional cultural elements used and borrowed in nine Chinese domestic animation films (self drawn table)

Animation Movies	Tradition culture elements included
“Monkey King: Hero is Back”	“Journey to the west”, shadow puppetry, Auspicious clouds, stilted buildings, pavilions, arch bridges, Peking Opera masks, ink paintings, Buddhism, Taoism, classical music, amulet
“Big Fish & Begonia”	Zhuangzi’s “A Happy Excursion”, “The Classic of Mountains and Seas”, “Sou Shen Ji”, dragon and phoenix, Hakka tulou, couplets, Chinese painting, Taoist thought of the unity of nature and man, Buddhist concept of reincarnation, Chinese painting (inscription at the beginning), mythological figures Sister Leizu, Zhuang Zhou Thought, Lanterns, Stone Lions, Auspicious Clouds
“White Snake” 1	Myth “Lady White Snake”, Four Folk Legends of Love, Liu Zongyuan’s “Snake Catcher”, ink animation (beginning), Buddhist pagoda architecture, traditional Chinese medicine (herbal medicine), oil-paper umbrella, ink landscape painting, Buddhism, pagoda, gossip, Taoism
“Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child”	“The Investiture of the Gods”, traditional landscape painting, reconstruction of mythological figures, Buddhism, Buddhist temples, landscape painting “Cosmo Matrix Paint”, dragon, Taoism
“Legend of Deification”	The traditional thought of the fallen leaves returning to their roots-to revert to one’s origin, the myth of the mysterious bird’s extradition of wronged souls, “The Investiture of the Gods”, Taoism, bronze ware, the remains of Dayu, the reincarnation of Buddhism, the return of Buddhism to the ruins, the traditional Chinese culture of mythical beasts
“White Snake” 2	Myth “Lady White Snake”, Four Folk Legends of Love, Liu Zongyuan’s “Snake Catcher”, ink painting, Buddhism, Diamond Sutra, Jinshan Temple, Phoenix Nirvana, “Dabao Jijing”, “Journey to the West”, Kongming Lantern, relief sculpture (at the end), The evolution of clothing
“I Am What I Am”	Ink painting (title), intangible cultural heritage - traditional folk art lion & dragon dance, dialect, storytelling, traditional ethics, Lingnan culture
“The Legend of Yang Jian”	Mythology “The Investiture of the Gods”, ink painting, costumes of the Wei and Jin dynasties, traditional architecture in Shaanxi, Dunhuang and other places, Dunhuang flying art, traditional Chinese culture of mythical beasts - Xuan brid

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Animation Movies	Tradition culture elements included
“Goodbye Monster”	Ancient book “The Classic of Mountains and Seas” (one of the three ancient books), Chinese traditional mythical beast culture - Bai Ze/Jiuwei/Yingyu/Suzaku/Xuanwu/White tiger/Qinglong, Chinese medicine culture, traditional architecture, Tianjin dialect, ink painting, bamboo slips

more diverse characters, richer story backgrounds, and more forms of narrative awaiting the creators of domestic animation films to develop and create.

5.3 Based on the Present: The Use of Scientific and Technological Elements to Achieve Innovation

While contemporary domestic animation films extensively use traditional cultural elements to add Chinese characteristics and national connotations to their films, they also use digital and artistic means to inject fresh blood into them. W. J. T. Mitchell, a leading scholar in contemporary visual culture studies, believes that technology can bring new ways of communication, new images and new ways of expressing ideas.

Integrating technology is an inevitable trend in the process of contemporary domestic animation creation. Only when the film creation team draws on traditional cultural elements, uses modern technology and sophisticated production to give traditional Chinese culture a new presentation, and reconstructs the imagery of traditional culture through internet thinking, can it better inspire the emotional resonance of contemporary audiences.

Therefore, the creators should use traditional Chinese cultural elements to achieve the unity of scenery and people and intermingle with each other. When using Chinese traditional cultural elements, creators should avoid ignoring the features, applying those elements to the animation scenes. Instead, they should choose the appropriate traditional cultural elements based on the character image and spiritual core to be shown in the animation film, and carry out modernized design and reconstruction to make them rich in modern characteristics and contemporary values. Only by better combining traditional cultural elements with digital technology can we give audiences multiple visual, cultural and spiritual enjoyment while driving the reinvention of traditional culture and spreading a diverse Chinese image and culture.

6 Conclusion

China is a country with thousands of years of civilization, which has a long history of traditional culture and profound traditional thought, which provides rich resources for our artistic creation and sublimates the spiritual core of domestic animation films.

Chinese traditional culture, with its rich and diversified contents and profound connotations, has broadened the boundaries of the creation of domestic animation films.

Through the use of traditional cultural elements, contemporary domestic animation films have made several successful attempts to promote traditional culture and add cultural heritage to the animation films at the same time. But there are still problems that need to be figured out. For example, what kind of traditional cultural elements to use, how to successfully use traditional cultural elements, and through the modernization of the creation of its perfect presentation.

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