

Characteristics of Postmodernity in Chinese Animation Films

Cao Yijun*, HyunSeok Lee**

**Lecturer, Department of Film Studies, Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, China
Professor, Department of Design, Pusan National University, Korea
leehs@pusan.ac.kr, 13367287276@163.com
Correspondent Author: HyunSeok Lee** (leehs@pusan.ac.kr)*

Abstract

At a specific juncture in industrial development, animation emerges as a product imbued with discernible features characteristic of the mechanical replication era. Through the integration of technology, it continually gives rise to postmodern cultural traits. Notably, the trajectories of postmodernism in China and Western Europe exhibit divergence. Following the reform and opening up, both postmodernism and modernism found acceptance and became interwoven. Chinese animated films, influenced by postmodernism, actively challenge traditional animation norms, exemplifying postmodern characteristics such as deconstruction, intertextuality, indeterminacy, collage, and diversity. This article endeavors to delve into the discourse surrounding postmodernism in both Western and Chinese contexts. It aims to scrutinize the manifestation of postmodern features, particularly with regard to ethnic elements, traditional mythological texts, and gender representations in Chinese animated films. Consequently, it becomes imperative to contemplate the affirmative adaptation and independent development of postmodernism within the unique Chinese milieu.

*Building upon an analysis of noteworthy traditional animated film genres and developmental trends in China, this study focuses on animated films from the 21st century, specifically *Monkey King: Hero is Back*, *Big Fish & Begonia*, *Dahufa*, *White Snake* and *Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child*. The paper seeks to explore the overarching characteristics of postmodernity reflected in the linguistic environment of postmodernism in China.*

Keywords: *Postmodernity, Chinese Animation, Traditional Culture.*

1. Introduction

Modernism is rooted in industrial civilization, characterized by a tendency toward urban centrism resulting from later industrialization. In contrast, postmodernism is grounded in the information society, specifically the post-industrial society, displaying an inclination towards the subdivision of national and ethnic groups. In the development process of modern capitalism, the alliance between the bourgeoisie and the upper-class and monopolizes all cultural activities. This leads to the opposition between high culture and the culture of the

Manuscript Received: January. 16, 2024 / Revised: January. 30, 2024 / Accepted: February. 10, 2024
Corresponding Author: leehs@pusan.ac.kr
Tel: +82-51-510-2952, Fax: +82-51-512-1741
Professor, Department of Design, Pusan National University, Korea

middle and lower classes, while providing a certain space for the spread and development of popular culture. In this social context, the emergence of postmodernism is a social and cultural phenomenon that meets the demands of popular culture.

As observed, key concepts such as late capitalism, mass culture, and globalization emerge from discussions within the realm of postmodernism. Notably, postmodernism prominently features anti-elitism, exhibiting a distinctive characteristic of negating existing forms and order, leading to disintegration. In the 20th century, due to the two World Wars, economic crises in capitalist societies, and the impact of various violent movements, rationalism gradually came under suspicion. The destruction caused by these wars led to a widespread doubt about idealism and heroism. And with creating new movement in art theology and in presenting a modern worldview, modernism led to a greater exploration of the “self”. [1] The emergence of postmodern philosophy can be perceived as a response to the escalating rationalism and the adverse consequences brought about by the rapid development of modern science and technology.

In the 1980s, postmodernism began to exert its influence on China. Although there wasn't a significant rejection initially, it was in the 1990s, with the opening of the Chinese market and increased international exchanges, that the impact of postmodernism rapidly expanded. Freud's theories profoundly shaped the development of postmodernism, exerting a profound influence through rational understanding and in-depth analysis of human desires. The strong resonance with Freudian theories and postmodernism is closely tied to the era and social context. Reflections on the decade-long Cultural Revolution, the pursuit of individual values, a longing for secular life, and reflections on literary forms like the ambiguous poetry questioning the limitations of rationality are considered cultural prerequisites for China's acceptance of postmodernism. The cultural pluralism advocated by postmodernism held significant liberating significance for the Chinese people at that time. After enduring prolonged constraints of moral norms and opposition to desire pursuits, the Chinese people developed widespread skepticism toward idealism and heroism. In this context, while China might not have been influenced by the socially grounded postmodernism as much as Western countries, various aspects of Chinese cultural life and artistic thought, including philosophy, film, and animation, started unfolding.

Nietzsche attempted to subvert Western Christian traditions and eliminate the core values of Western thought. The world transformed into a diverse and intricate web of connections, with centers and hegemony disappearing. In ancient China, two thousand years ago, Zhuangzi advocated in *Autumn Floods* the respect for the inherent principles of all things in the world, opposing the imposition of human subjective consciousness upon the general principles of the world and all life. Consequently, it can be observed that Zhuangzi's philosophical ideas bear a resemblance to postmodernist thought. Similarly, Laozi's socially critical concept of *Dao De Jing* aligns closely with postmodernist theories, demonstrating a high level of consistency with ideas of harmony, ecology, and the social status of women in later postmodernist thought. Rooted in this traditional cultural milieu, Chinese philosophical discourse is also influenced by Confucianism and Buddhist principles. Chinese animation has cultivated a distinctive ethnic art system and aesthetic animation framework by deliberately drawing on and inheriting elements from traditional culture, encompassing religion, art, folk customs, and more.

Building upon the aforementioned content, the author conducts an analysis of Chinese animated films, exploring various dimensions. This includes the re-creation and homage to the expression of Chinese-style symbolic elements such as ethnic components, traditional myths, texts, and music. The study delves into how a character's emotions, contradictions, or stances undergo interpretation to achieve a satirical effect, the blurred boundaries between gender images, and the compromise treatment of outcomes. Additionally, the analysis highlights the emphasis on the acceptance and coexistence of other ethnic groups, cultures, and customs, the

proliferation of mixed imitation techniques, and the dynamic portrayal of characters' psychological states in scenes devoid of dialogue. It is noteworthy that China has not yet fully embraced a pure postmodern animation style; instead, a fusion of modernism and postmodernism characteristics is frequently observed. Many animated productions engage in thoughtful reflections on traditional enlightenment values, offer critiques of social issues, and embark on explorations and constructions of aesthetic values. This multifaceted approach reflects the ongoing process of self-adaptation and independent development of postmodernism with positive implications within the evolving Chinese context.

2. Representing deconstruction and intertextuality in Chinese animated films

Since the 1990s, postmodernism has become a focal point with its center in the United States, subsequently extending its influence to Latin America, East Asia, South Asia, and other regions. Based on its prevalent tendencies, postmodernism can be categorized into two types: deconstructive postmodernism and constructive postmodernism. Postmodernism is a contentious term in Western studies and it is even more contentious in Chinese literary studies and the debate created around it shows how ideologies are not merely adopted by the recipient culture but become subject to change.[2] In the context of China's socio-political landscape, an examination of the postmodernist discourse reveals a nation comprised of the proletariat and diverse ethnic groups, assimilating the principles of anti-authoritarianism, anti-elitism, and diversity inherent in postmodernism. Films and television productions in China accentuate the importance of acknowledging and embracing the coexistence of various ethnic groups, cultures, customs, and traditional techniques.

As observed, Jacques Derrida's primary focus revolves around the deconstructive theory of anti-Logos centrism. Ihab Hassan, in his postmodern research centered on cultural phenomena, introduces the characteristics of disintegration and intertextuality. Herbert Marcuse contends that modern industrial society and technological totalitarianism have engendered individuals within a one-dimensional society and a One-Dimensional Man. This societal structure, according to Marcuse, erases the richness of human nature, rendering individuals akin to machines. Therefore, for this reason, human spiritual rescue requires art to be implemented.[3] The impact of postmodernism on art has given rise to Dadaism, a movement that originated within Pop Art and eventually permeated the entire artistic domain. Postmodern art surpasses the delineations between life and art through the mechanisms of disintegration and intertextuality. Jameson characterizes postmodern art as an expression that prioritizes pure pleasure and satisfaction. Theory and beauty constitute the fundamental elements of the postmodern end of art. [4] This conclusion does not signify annihilation; rather, it implies the marginalization of art, a marginalization that should not be misconstrued as the demise of art. In the era of globalized information development, the deconstruction, intertextuality, and distinctive virtual reality embedded in animated films carry significant postmodern implications.

Chinese novels like *The Monkey King*, 1961, *The Princess of Iron Fan*, 1941 and *Pigsy Eats Watermelon*, 1958 draw inspiration from the mythological novel *Journey to the West*. Similarly, *Lotus Lantern*, 1999 originates from mythological novels, transcending national and ethnic boundaries in material selection. Cultural integration beyond borders and ethnicities becomes a trend, and the dissolution of cultural barriers is evident not only in the choice of stories but also in examples like Japan's *Dragon Ball* drawing inspiration from China's classical *Journey to the West*, and America's *Mulan* drawing inspiration from ancient Chinese legendary stories. Such cultural exchanges not only enrich the content of animation creation but also provide a broader cultural experience for the audience.

In leveraging intellectual property (IP) resources within original works that have already demonstrated economic and visual market effects, there is a full embodiment of the characteristics of postmodern cinema. One of the characteristics of postmodernism is mechanical replication, commodity replication, and mass production.[5] Traditional Chinese IP animated films, such as *Monkey King: Hero is Back*, *Big Fish & Begonia*, *White Snake*, *Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child* among others, employ hypertext simulation and imitation techniques to embody intertextual characteristics. While maintaining a light-hearted atmosphere, they rationalize and subvert classical character images, stripping away the loftiness and seriousness associated with classical culture. These films disrupt traditional narrative conventions, deconstruct original texts, and alter the composition of traditional animation through character design, personalities, and scene performances. Moreover, they integrate diverse elements from traditional Chinese culture. In terms of narrative characteristics, parody is highlighted as a core narrative technique in postmodern animated films. By parodying traditional stories, characters, scenes, and shots, these works use popular culture as their object of imitation, juxtaposing classic plots and scenes with contemporary popular culture, deconstructing traditional animated films in an entertaining language. However, it is important to note that deconstruction is not the sole purpose of parody but rather a form of construction, a beneficial rethinking in the context of commercial culture.

Monkey King: Hero is Back recreates the animated film *The Monkey King*, 1964 through symbolic music, actions, and text. It incorporates Chinese ethnic elements and draws upon traditional Chinese myths and novels for adaptation and recreation. The mythical hero Sun Wukong in classics is an exalted figure, but in *Monkey King: Hero Is Back*, he possesses universal characteristics of an ordinary person. It can be seen that the hero pursued by postmodernism, in line with the negation of absolute existence, is consistent.

In terms of textual analysis, this film presents a deconstructive characteristic of postmodernism, departing from the original work *Journey to the West*. The depiction of the Monkey King as a middle-aged uncle reflects satirical characteristics. Satirization usually involves denying tradition in a hypertextual manner, subverting representation. The creator performs through mockery, irony, imitation, and homage. The expression of irony and mockery is metaphorically manifested in opposition to unfair social systems or human alienation, often accompanied by elements of humor. Additionally, this performance is reinforced through exaggerated actions. The trend in Chinese cinema is not to reproduce the deified existence or heroic image in animated films but to depict popular culture centered around ordinary people. Additionally, the film employs Transmedia Storytelling, reproducing independent yet interrelated intertextuality from the original work.

In *White Snake* sourced from Tang Dynasty writer Liu Zongyuan's *The Snake Catcher* and based on the folk legend *Madame White Snake*, intangible cultural heritage elements are presented through deconstruction and mixed imitation in narrative and plot setting. The film cleverly echoes the ending with the beginning of *Madame White Snake*, showcasing intertextual features. *Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child* preserves the main plot lines of the original novel *Nezha's Troubles in the Sea*, incorporating references and tributes to achieve intertextual characteristics, thereby providing users with a fresh aesthetic experience.

Character construction in these films involves techniques such as mirror contrast and diverse personality constructions. The disruptive rewriting of characters, as seen with Ling Zhu Ao Bing destroying the world while Mo Wan Nezha saves the world, deviates from tradition, establishing two entirely new characters in opposition. Nezha and Ao Bing both strive for identity elevation within the mirror structure, a concept containing Lacan's notions of self-identity, subjectivity construction, and self-division. The identity struggles of Nezha and Ao Bing become clearer in the mirror like structure.[6] Nezha, originally an outsider in Chinese mythology, originated as a guardian deity in Indian Buddhism. It was later introduced to China with the transmission of Buddhism from India to the Chinese cultural milieu. Nezha also underwent several changes

and exhibited the characteristics of the fusion of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism.[7] Although the story itself has a strong local mythological prototype, it adopts a narrative approach that goes beyond grand narrative and even anti-Exoticism, making families and individuals the focus of the narrative, minimizing the limitations of context on reading movie stories, and creating an important condition for such animated films to go abroad.[8] This adaptation transcends linguistic and cultural limitations from other ethnicities, employing animated films as a medium for global audiences to witness and connect with their own emotions.

Furthermore, in terms of character images and background music, there is a deliberate deconstruction of elements from China's ethnic culture. In *Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child*, the film incorporates the appearance of Sanxingdui cultural relics and other traditional cultural artifacts through mixed imitation. Nezha's distinctive double meatball head and the Red Armillary Sash shape are crafted using collage techniques reminiscent of traditional Chinese New Year paintings. *Monkey King: Hero Is Back* showcases postmodern characteristics such as the dismantling and recombination of traditional and classical elements, the construction of diverse character personalities, and the fusion of regional and Western music. It subverts and reorganizes existing historical features or elements. The film's musical backdrop features traditional local dramas from the northwest, specifically the Qin Opera and the Daggers Society Overture. The Qin Opera employs traditional instruments like the Suona, supplemented by the pipa and erhu, creating a sense of grandeur. The ethnic orchestral piece *Chuangjiang Ling* underscores the wisdom and martial prowess of the great sage through its tense and vigorous melody. The coordination between performance and music, along with the reinterpretation and deconstruction of traditional music, can be attributed to the influence of Western diversity, free thinking, punk, rock, and street culture on Chinese music. In the exploration of Chinese animated film aesthetics, postmodern aesthetics blends with traditional aesthetics, presenting a relatively restrained and restrained artistic expression, in stark contrast to the strong expression of Western animation. In Chinese postmodern animated films, the shaping of film language focuses more on the use of metaphor and analogy. Through the clever construction of shots, it re-explores postmodern aesthetics, integrating it with the aesthetic principles of traditional poetics. For example, *Big Fish & Begonia* draws inspiration for character design from *Xiaoyao You*, *Shijing*, and *Shanhaijing*, presenting a new aesthetic for the era through postmodern deconstruction and reconstruction.



Figure 1. Characters in *Big Fish & Begonia*(www.sohu.com)

3. Reflecting collage and indeterminacy in Chinese animated films

The American postmodern theorist Frederick Jameson, in his examination of the historical status of the capitalist economic system and the prevailing cultural logic of capitalism, has articulated the characteristics of postmodernism. These encompass collage, the erosion of historical sensibility, and the popularization of

aesthetics. Jameson asserts that postmodern society intricately intertwines culture, industrial production, and commodities. For instance, the release of films and the mass production of videotapes, audiotapes, etc., coalesce visual culture with products. Deviating from traditional artistic paradigms concerning value, appreciation, and dissemination, contemporary art manifests a consumerist inclination. It employs sophisticated artistic methodologies, including collaborative efforts and amalgamation, to transition from montage to collage within the language of film—a distinctive characteristic emblematic of postmodern cinema.

Ibrahim Hassan's proposed postmodern characteristics of mixing find reflection in the collage techniques employed in postmodern films. In the 1960s, some works began to use collage as a form of expression, using discovery short stories (news films, old movies) and diverse images (advertisements, snapshots, posters, etc.) to make movies.[9] Post-1968, French cinema, notably in the works of Jean-Luc Godard and several films by Jean-Marie Straub, already embodied the rebellious spirit and certain formal elements of postmodernist cinema. Techniques such as collages, the free insertion of citations and photos, reproduction of filming scenes, television interviews, and direct engagement with audiences became means of subverting traditional film language.

Within the realm of fully leveraging intellectual property (IP) resources and the context of intertextuality, the Chinese classic *Journey to the West* has been remade multiple times into online and original films. The elimination of authority and classicism through replication is a prominent feature of postmodernism. A notable example is the Chinese live-action movie *A Chinese Odyssey*, 1995 where collages and imitations are seamlessly integrated into scene performances. Classical content transcends temporal and spatial constraints, with spatial characters assembled from different periods around 500 years, creating a carnival comedy form for the entire storyline.

Collage characteristics in Chinese animated films are also evident in the increased mixed expression of elements from various fields, such as nationality, ethnicity, race, and religion. In the Chinese animated film *Big Fish & Begonia*, character names borrowed from Xiaoyao You and the Taoist philosophy of breaking free from the constraints of form and pursuing absolute spiritual freedom are applied in the narration. The Buddhist concept of reincarnation hints at the transition between life and death, stating that everyone is a fish, illustrated by the scene of Kun being reborn in the water. It can be seen that the transformation of forms of people, gods, and nature in films is common with Zhuangzi's philosophical thought and postmodernism. Zhuangzi's *Qi Wu Lun* advocates a comprehensive skepticism of existing knowledge systems. Furthermore, Western postmodernism questions universal knowledge, science, and standards. From this perspective, the essential nature of thought in the East and West is very similar. Zhuangzi's thought negates the myths of Confucianism and Mohism, dismantles theories and thoughts, and advocates free thinking about cognition and concepts. Zhuangzi's *Qi Wu Lun*, by attempting to dismantle the knowledge system, reflects postmodern characteristics such as vagueness in thought, denial of authority, and the dismantling of absolute systems. The presentation of Taoist and Buddhist elements in the film reflects the collage characteristics of postmodernism.

Another work employing the same technique is *White Snake*. The *Zhenyao Buddha Pagoda*, based on the appearance of the *Huilong Pagoda*, highlights traditional Chinese wooden structure construction techniques (intangible cultural heritage of humanity). It incorporates traditional Taoist culture such as the Five Elements and Eight Trigrams, and the transformation of yin and yang. Combining unique Chinese styles and two religions in the same visual effect diversifies the collage of intangible cultural heritage in animated performances. This directing style is gradually becoming a unique feature of the new Chinese style animation.

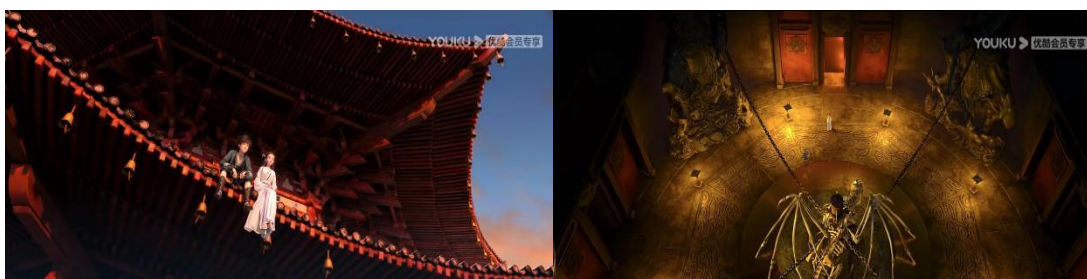


Figure 2. The appearance and taoist elements construction of the Zhenyao pagoda(www.youku.com)

Paul Feyerabend's pluralistic methodology and Ihab Hassan's concept of indeterminacy are intricately linked to the discourse within postmodern philosophy. Postmodernism underscores that uncertainty is an inherent trait of human language, thought, and the trajectory of human history. François Lyotard adopts a skeptical stance toward meta-narratives. Within the realm of contemporary knowledge, which encompasses narrative and scientific knowledge, postmodern research posits that postmodernism encapsulates heterogeneity, diversity, micro-narratives, diverse standards, instability, and fundamental characteristics of anti-system and anti-essence. It also delineates the “postmodern”—the realm of the copy, the desultory remark, the surface of the image, and the counterfeit.[10]

Indeterminacy and complexity are evident in Chinese animated films, where the distinction between a neutral ending and an ambiguous gender image is blurred. This complexity extends to multiple transformations involving conflicting points, character positions, and character forms. In these films, individuals exist as components of multiple relationships, and there is no absolute divide between humans (characters) and non-humans (objects and backgrounds). For instance, in *Dahufa*, the Peanut people undergo a transformation from oppression to wielding violence for freedom due to a new power division. Similarly, in *White Snake* the relationship between the national teacher and the snake demon evolves from love to opposition, and the bond between the snake demon and the white snake shifts from trust to betrayal. In *Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child*, the relationship between Ne Zha and Ao Bing transforms from rivalry to friendship, then from friendly fate to a confrontational relationship, ultimately culminating in a joint confrontation. The attitudes of characters in the movies also shift from prejudice to recognition.

In terms of performance techniques, *Dahufa* employs flashback techniques to depict the protagonist's evolving psychological state in a scene of continuous changes without dialogue. The inclusion of non-real human violence and bloody scenes expands the audience's perspectives on Chinese animated films and prompts reflection on the deeper meanings behind such portrayals. These editing and flashback techniques can be traced back to the experiments of *Fluxus*. *Fluxus* focused on nonlinear narrative styles or structures, capturing the audience's attention. *Dahufa* also concludes with a compromise ending, leaving the characters' fates blurred and unclear. This conceptual blank space treatment invites diverse audience interpretations to complete the entire plot of the movie.

4. Characteristics of diversity embodied in Chinese animated films

The active global economy and the enhanced living standards in Europe have further propagated the inclination of new waves, young cinemas, and new cinemas to critique traditional customs. The 21st-century cinema theory reflects the characteristics of interconnected rhizomes within a unidirectional development model. The evolution of non-mainstream content and forms in movies is ongoing, with films portraying

homosexuality and ethnic minority descendants offering new perspectives to audiences worldwide. The characteristics of postmodern films in Western Europe since 1960 can be summarized as follows. Firstly, deconstruction and psychoanalysis; Secondly, feminism and gender studies/ homosexuality theory; Thirdly, the development of historical and cultural criticism(neo-historicism, postcolonial theory), mixing and satirical imitation, mixing of self-reflexive and intertextual themes or "games" with themes; disrupting meta narrative; mixing fiction and facts; emphasizing audience participation or cognition, etc., all of which are the main characteristic of postmodern cinema.[11]

With the ongoing development of post-industrial society, the transition from structuralist films to pluralistic films illustrates a distinct departure in the non-logical and non-ethical arrangement of story plots from the prevailing trends in current mainstream animated films. In Yang Schönsmeier's *Možnosti dialogu*, 1983 the combination of cartoons with heterogeneity devoid of common elements serves to metaphorically depict dialogue and communication. This creates a theoretical opposition between the fields of animation and art, leading to the blurring of boundaries. Experimental schools and styles in animation continue to evolve, with films featuring real-life characters, animated characters, and even puppets reflecting the diverse characteristics of content and form.

Chinese animated films integrate traditional art elements such as painting, murals, New Year paintings, sculpture, folk crafts, and local opera, reorganizing them into a modern artistic framework. Chinese traditional painting techniques have contributed to the creation of animated films with distinct Chinese characteristics, rooted in the art passed down through generations in China. This forms the unique artistic characteristics of Chinese animated films. The diversity inherent in postmodernism aims to subvert traditional art while absorbing a variety of elements, enhancing humanistic spirit and artistic expression methods. In Chinese animated films, the primary manifestation lies not only in the diverse combination of traditional cultural elements but also in the concentrated expression of multi-ethnic cultures. As Johann Friedrich Herbart, a renowned German ethicist, posited, an artist's creation should encompass not only personal and national emotions but also profound ideological content and spiritual value. Art transcends the boundaries of individual ethnic groups and represents a shared cultural wealth among them. All ethnic groups have an art to express their emotions.[12] China, consisting of a proletariat and various ethnic groups, assimilates the anti-authoritarianism, anti-elitism, and diversified characteristics of postmodernism. Chinese animated films underscore the acceptance and coexistence of diverse ethnic groups, cultures, and customs, with an increasing incorporation of traditional techniques such as mixed imitation of clothing, totems, and patterns.

Examining the fusion of diversity and ethnic culture in *Big Fish & Begonia*, the female protagonist, Chun, dons a red Chinese left lapel top, while the male protagonist wears a red rope around his ankles, creating an overall ambiance of classical Chinese clothing. Supporting characters, like Rat Woman, are dressed in patterned cheongsam attire and hold oil paper umbrellas, resembling characters from traditional Chinese drama. Significant characteristics of postmodernist fashion design are evident. Firstly, it emphasizes the importance of subjective spirit, placing design at the core of individual perception and identity. Secondly, it underscores the correlation between symbols and semantics, imparting deeper layers of meaning to design. Thirdly, it pays attention to traditional cultural contexts, integrating design into the continuity of history and culture. Fourthly, it pursues the complexity of decorative forms, providing design with more layers and dimensions. Fifthly, it focuses on the ecological environment, making design considerations not only aesthetically driven but also mindful of the importance of sustainability and environmental protection. In the Chinese animated film *Big Fish & Begonia*, a noteworthy characteristic is the high regard for regional culture.

The scene design considers aesthetic, practical, and safety aspects, referencing the century-old Fujian

Province earth buildings of Hakka architecture. The earth buildings, as a cultural heritage with Chinese characteristics, depict a collective living form, symbolically representing China through elements like couplets, red lanterns, fish, crabapple, and water. The dragon and phoenix imagery in the movie reflects China's totemic worship of these symbols since ancient times.

Furthermore, diversification is evident in genres, forms, expressive techniques, and the blurring and popularization of boundaries between animated content and daily life. Chinese animated films, starting in the 1960s, experimented with various approaches, including ink animation and traditional folk culture, earning global recognition as the Chinese School. These films successfully conveyed traditional Chinese cosmology and philosophical concepts, embracing the essence of traditional art that replaces realism with freehand brushwork. While inheriting tradition, Chinese animation showcases a trend of diversified development rooted in the historical and cultural background containing traditional Taoist, Confucian, and Buddhist thoughts.

The use of traditional Chinese materials in narratives, combined with traditional artistic expressions and techniques, is interpreted through mixed imitation and deconstruction. Chinese animated films reproduce various Chinese painting techniques, spanning different periods, to outline characters' psychological states and personalities. And In the film *White Snake*, the Taoist priest uses the pithy formula of leaving fire and Geng earth to match with the crane transformed by the paper figure and the seal character. Through the integration of technology, folk customs, traditional art, drama, Quyi, folk literature, cultural space, and other elements in intangible cultural heritage, Chinese animated films bring these cultural aspects to life. The combination of traditional elements and intangible cultural heritage manifests in a classical yet modern synthesis, representing a blend of tradition and innovation.



Figure 3. The crane transformed by the paper figure and the seal character(www.youku.com)

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

In the context of a China comprised of the proletariat and diverse ethnicities, a distinct form of postmodernism has emerged, marked by features such as anti-authoritarianism, anti-elitism, and pluralism. This Chinese variant of postmodernism exhibits certain parallels with Confucianism while integrating the Taoist concept of unity of heaven and man, emphasizing the harmonious relationship between humans and nature. It represents a synthesis of traditional thought and social structures with postmodernist currents.

Culturally, Chinese postmodernism, through deconstruction, intertextuality, and collage, experimentally incorporates elements of intangible cultural heritage, such as folk literature, paper-cutting, shadow puppetry, and folk New Year paintings, into animated creations. This practice aims to celebrate traditional culture while innovatively preserving and transmitting intangible cultural heritage.

In the realm of postmodernist cinema in China, a trend emphasizing social pluralism is evident, particularly through collage techniques that underscore the notion of a commonality between ethnic minorities and the Han majority. This approach showcases a more diverse and emotionally resonant portrayal of ordinary life. Characterization in films becomes more complex and diverse, transitioning from the glorification of absolute heroism to depicting everyday heroes. This blurring of boundaries between good and evil is accompanied by a shift towards the normalization and humanization of characters, with postmodern feminist ideology endowing female characters with independent personalities that deviate from traditional stereotypes. Overall, postmodernist animation challenges authority and norms through reflections on gender images, female representations, and societal consciousness.

In terms of artistic techniques, Chinese postmodernist cinema liberates itself from traditional metaphysical constraints, employing deconstructive techniques with an uncertainty inherent in deconstructionism. Themes of desire, ironic narratives, and engaging parodies embody postmodern aesthetic characteristics. The pursuit of the sublime diminishes, giving way to a gamified simulation, reshaping gender images, overturning traditional narrative forms, and engaging in the reconstruction of the classical. Through satire, mockery, and dark comedy, new expressive forms are created, rejecting traditional grand narratives and showcasing the diverse features of postmodernism. This creative ethos is expected to persist in Chinese animation, reflecting profound contemplations on society, culture, and art.

References

- [1] Abdolmajid Arfaei Moghaddam and Amaludin ABD Rahman, "Three of concepts: Modernism, Postmodernism and globalization," *Elixir International Journal*, Vol. 43, p. 6644, 2012:6643-6649
- [2] Mary Mazzilli, "Theoretical Studies of China," *The Journal of Chinese Language and Literature*, No. 49, p. 259, 2011.8, 249-272
- [3] Feng Minsheng, "The Deconstruction of Art Meaning and Value by Postmodernism," *Art Magazine*, No. 10, p.102, 2005. doi: 10.13864/j.cnki.cn11-1311/j.2005.10.006
- [4] Yu Zhongwen, "On the Boundary between Postmodernist Art and Modernist Art," *Journal of Chongqing University*, Vol. 12, No. 5, p. 114, 2006(5):108-114.
- [5] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernist Cultural Theory*, Peking University Press, p. 198, 2005. ISBN: 9787301032657
- [6] Liu Qi, "Ne Zha: Mirror Structure and Cultural Reconfiguration," *Film Art*, No. 5, p. 47, 2019(05):46-49.
- [7] Liu Wengang, "Research on the Evolution of the Mythical Image of Nezha," *Religious Studies*, No. 3, p. 178, 2009(03):178-183.
- [8] Liu Jun, Zhang Yuqiang, "Global Learning and Local Enhancement: New Reflections on the International Communication of Chinese Animation Films - Based on the Discussion of "Nezha's Demon Child Descends,"" *International Communications*, No. 9, p. 54, 2019(09):53-56+1.
- [9] David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, *Film History*, Peking University Press, p. 571, 2018. ISBN: 978-7-301-23183-8/J-0535
- [10] Marchetti, Gina, "Asian Citations: Postmodernism, Politics, and Global Cinema," *Korean Association Of Literature And Film*, Vol. 14, No. 1, p.6, 2013. 14(1), 5-25
- [11] Zu Jinsu, "Postmodernism and Film, Jin Wudong's Postmodernism and Art," *Whole World*, p.231. 1991.
- [12] Friedrich Paulsen, *Ethics System*, China Social Sciences Press, p. 481, 1988. ISBN: 9787500400677