Cultural Intersection and Technological Connotation in the Film Coco

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Abstract
The film “Coco” was screened worldwide, triggering a movie-going frenzy by its deep humanistic heritage and perfect grasp of the film’s artistry. Not only did the film make a perfect comeback in China, but it also achieved a global cultural export, which to some extent depends on Pixar’s successful strategy of cross-cultural expression. Behind this stunning effect, the high restoration of traditional Mexican cultural elements, the anti-traditional performance of the theme of death and the international top technological level of animation production are all factors of the film’s success.

Keywords
Coco; Mexico; Cultural intersection; Technology

Introduction

At the end of 2017, “Coco” was screened worldwide, triggering a frenzy of movie-watching with its profound humanistic heritage and perfect grasp of its artistry. The film was co-produced by Pixar Animation Studios and Disney Studios. As the only original animation from Pixar Studios in recent years, the film showcased the unique charm of traditional Mexican culture. It became the fastest-growing animated film at the box office in Mexican cinema history. The film won the ninetieth Academy Award for Best Original Song and the Best Animated Feature Film two golden statue awards in 2018, becoming Pixar’s most popular animated film in the past decade. At the same time, “Coco” quickly set off a movie-going boom in China, becoming another American animated film that gained more than one billion at the box office after the screening of “Zootopia”.

Due to globalization, the popularity of consumerism, and the influence of global media dissemination outside of China, the cross-cultural dissemination of animated films has become an inevitable cultural norm. The fact that “Coco” has broken through the cultural barrier and not only made a

perfect comeback in China but also achieved a global cultural export depends to a certain extent on Pixar's successful strategy of cross-cultural expression. By analyzing the core competencies of such a film, which narrates about family, dreams, life, and death, we can find that the Pixar team has a kind of cross-cultural expression. It can be seen that the Pixar team has an eclectic cultural consciousness, and the specific application of its cross-cultural communication strategy is significant for the domestic animation industry. From the perspective of cultural mix, behind the sensational effect, the high restoration of traditional Mexican cultural elements, the return of human emotions, the anti-conventional performance of the theme of death, and the international top-level of animation production are all factors of the film's success.

Selection of Cultural Materials from Other Countries for Conversion and Integration

Cross-cultural communication is the communication process of interaction and exchange between different countries in heterogeneous cultures. In the film "Coco", the transplantation, change, and reconstruction of Mexican cultural elements have been unanimously praised, realizing Pixar's nationalized narrative strategy and providing audiences from different countries with connotations and values different from their national cultures. The film shows scenes of Mexican storytelling and tells a moving story with its embedded cultural core, leading global audiences of different cultures and ethnic groups to build the meaning and value of communication and exchange.

In addition, the creative team was well prepared to draw on local Mexican culture to ensure that every detail of "Mexico's rich exoticism" was correct. Director Onkrich believes: "Mexican folk art combines skeletons with cheerful festive colors, which triggered my imagination, and the more I know about the Day of the Dead, the deeper its impact on me." the film's creators traveled to Mexico several times for location shooting, researching and examining the Mexicanized way of life and its traditional holiday "Day of the Dead" for seven years".

The film succeeds in encoding and decoding the non-verbal symbols that construct the actual space, and it also has a profound grasp of many aspects of the daily life of the Mexican people. In using non-verbal signs, Mexican cultural elements are reflected in the food, clothing, housing, and transportation. Their meanings can be parsed and expanded to a certain extent by viewers from different countries and regions, effectively serving the overall narrative. Mexican elements are used in the film's scenes, with colorful and imaginative architecture, and many streets, churches, and cemeteries can be found in the local area.Colorful paper cutouts are typical of Mexico's style, whether on earth or in the world of the undead; the festival is hung up in the streets and alleys with dense, colorful paper cutouts. Paper cuttings, flowers, music, and other festive elements set off the "Day of the Dead" more like a carnival. Grandma cooks traditional food "tamal" for Miguel, and the of-

ferings include sweet cakes, tamales, pumpkin, and chicken with pico de gallo, all of which have a typical Mexican flavor. The costumes of the characters, especially the unique large-brimmed straw hats worn by the Mexican performers and singers, also have a distinctive Mexican style. And the characters' demeanor and movements are presented with experience, showing the characteristics of Mexican cultural background.

The use of traditional Mexican culture stops at the superficial setting of scenes and characters and the Mexicanization of social life, and this reality-based approach better explains the more profound connotation of traditional Mexican culture. The respect and worship of fashion icons are one of the national characteristics of Mexico.In addition, the social nature of the older generation of Mexican women's roles is reflected in the predominance of family life, generally engaged in family production or agriculture, and carrying a great deal of family responsibility. Miguel's grandmother is the backbone of the family and is respected by the whole family. Many elements of Mexican customs have similarities with traditional Chinese culture, which is thousands of miles apart. For example, on the eve of the Day of the Dead, Miguel lights candles and pine incense in his home. He sets up altar lit by candles and decorated with brightly colored marigold petals, pictures of deceased family members, and cards with messages of blessing. This scene has much in common with the stages of ancestor worship in China.

The plot revolves around the Mexican Day of the Dead, an important traditional festival in Mexico. In 2003, UNESCO declared the Day of the Dead a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. On the Day of the Dead in Mexico, various activities such as costume parades and cemetery worship are held to celebrate this important festival.The Mexican tradition believes that the spirits of the deceased can pass through the bridge of marigolds and return to the world of the living for a short period during the "Day of the Dead". The path from the cemetery to the home is covered with orange marigold petals, whose distinctive scents and brilliant colors lead the spirits of the deceased and guide them from the underworld to the earth to reunite with their surviving family members. The "Day of the Dead" is not only a time to remember our ancestors but also a time to reunite with them.

Pixar animation in cross-cultural communication, the creation of the ideal beautiful utopian virtual world, realistically and credibly to narrate, the unique cultural characteristics of the Mexican nation in the film are interpreted one by one.

The Packaging and Dissemination of Universal Values Give Rise to "Cultural Identity"

To reduce the resistance to cross-cultural communication and eliminate cultural discounts, Pixar

attaches importance to disseminating universal values recognized by the public. The film's cultural values and narrative contents are the core and foundation of cross-cultural communication. At the same time, cross-cultural communication should coexist with heterogeneous cultures. To obtain cultural identity, we must try to eliminate cultural differences, and the dissemination and expression of universal values is the primary way to realize cross-cultural communication.

The universal aspirations of people in different countries and regions have minimal barriers to communication in cross-cultural communication, which can easily trigger viewers' empathy and cultural identity. "Coco" goes beyond pure entertainment to promote universal cultural values, which is also the point of convergence between different nationalities and cultures in the East and West. In cross-cultural communication, "universal values" have a high degree of cultural recognition, such as the theme of family love, freedom, ideals, and dream seeking.In the movie "Coco", Pixar reflects on the harmony between people's family belonging and their ideal pursuit to satisfy their emotions and souls. The story takes two beautiful things to constitute the plot contradiction, on the one hand, the boy Miguel's ideal and pursuit of music, and on the other hand, the reconciliation and warmth of affection between the following family members, the two clues linking the whole plot. Thus, the film has a broad universality in terms of mainline narrative strategy and finds the audience's pain point.

The Emotional Element of "Affection" Meets the Audience's Aesthetic Perception

Culture has national boundaries, but "affection" can cross them. The theme of Mexican Day of the Dead and death in the film is only the surface content, the protection and praise of "family", the maintenance and promotion of the concept of family, is the core and highlight of the film. The film is a detailed argument for the ultimate choice of family supremacy through the journey of Ector and Miguel, and Pixar allows Miguel, a dreamer, to enter a magnificent dream world like the Land of the Dead.In the process of pursuing his musical dreams, he is guided to discover his family's blood ties. Miguel met his family's great-great-grandfather Ector in heaven. Ector loved music in his lifetime and left home to wander for his artistic dreams. Still, his daughter Coco haunted him, and one day he finally realized that if he had to choose between music and family, the family was more important than dreams. But before he returned home, he was killed by Dracus, and his family thought he had abandoned his family, a misunderstanding that lasted for more than a century. Later, when Miguel learned in heaven that his great-grandmother was about to pass away and that the ghost of his great-great-grandfather Ector might disappear forever, he too chose his family to abandon his dreams. Because he gradually realized that the years are changing, but love is eternal, and loved ones come first.

The memories and thoughts of loved ones keep the spirits alive in the underworld, a response of

affection that cannot be broken although they cannot see each other. Miguel's great-grandmother was in fragile health and facing memory loss; Miguel played the song "Remember me" on his guitar, composed by his great-great-grandfather for his great-grandmother. The moving tune awakened coco's memories of his father. They were subsequently reunited in the realm of the dead. Music alienates family members, but music rekindles the fire of kinship. Affection is the most tender emotion in people's hearts, the most touching content. This universal value of accompanying family members has touched audiences from all walks of life in all countries.

The film's delicate portrayal of the undead's inner emotions is also a shining point in the performance. The universal values of human affection, love and dreams are continued in the world of the dead, full of warmth and emotion. Family and kinship are also the traditional cultural view of the Chinese nation that values family ties, and the film naturally generated strong reactions in Chinese theatres.

The "Dream" and "Inspirational" Theme

From the theme of "Coco", it is an animation with strong Mexican traditional culture and American spirit and American individualism. It is an American inspirational animated film with the pursuit of musical dreams. Pixar has perfectly blended the theme of dreams in "Coco", and its entertaining expression includes narrative themes such as musical dreams, mental growth, and adventures in the world of the undead. The main character is 12-year-old country boy Miguel, who lives in a small Mexican town with four generations of shoemakers. While the family hopes Miguel will inherit the traditional craft he relies on for survival, Miguel has always been obsessed with music and strives to act on it. Miguel aspires to grow up to be a great musician like his idol musician Drakus; he crosses over to the world of the undead and starts a "dream journey" in a mysterious space, and gets the blessing of his relatives in the underworld, making his dream of becoming a musician come true. The spirit of never giving in reflects the "inspirational" theme of the film.

"Dream" is the mainline of the film, with Miguel's pursuit of his artistic dreams linking the story, using a progressive pattern of narration. Miguel's great-great-grandfather abandoned his family and left his home to pursue his music dream and never returned. His great-great-grandmother left a family rule that forbade family members to study music forever, and music has been considered a curse by the Miguel family ever since.Miguel fights against this dream-killing ancestral tradition, hiding from his relatives, secretly holding a homemade guitar to learn Drake's music, and even going to attend a music festival concert. Still, his family finds out and is opposed by the whole family, with his grandmother believing that music and lousy luck go hand in hand and smashing his guitar. Should Miguel follow his heart or meet the expectations of his family? This question continues throughout the play. The two can be harmonized, as the film integrates individualism into the fami-

ly's overall values, reflecting both identity and the collective good.

Miguel travels to the world of the undead to "seek the dream", which should solve the root cause of the family's generations of inaccessibility to music. If this problem is solved, Miguel will guard the dream of music in his heart. He met his great-great-grandfather during his dream search and uncovered the secret of why his family could not pursue music, and eventually facilitated reconciliation between his great-great-grandfather and great-great-grandmother. Since then, Miguel's pursuit of his musical dreams has supported his entire family.

The theme of "Dream-Quest" satisfies the spiritual needs of teenagers in the rebellious stage to realize their ideal values, a group of adventurous and imaginative people. The young people find solace in the drama of Miguel's continuous efforts to "follow his dream". Miguel dreamed that "one day I could be as successful as Dracus." Finally, one day, Miguel succeeds on the musical stage of the Undead City. His experience once again pays tribute to dreams, fulfils a specific need of the target audience, and inspires all dreamers.

The Theme of Death Anti-canonical Performance Strategy

Pixar's strong tradition and advantage have always been "to tell a good story that young and old can understand", and through "Coco", Pixar shows the audience a theme that is often avoided: death.

In the real world, death-related festivals are generally solemn and peaceful. At the same time, many films that show the dead world generally highlight a dark and cold atmosphere, which is a world of horror, usually unpleasant and even need to be rejected. The audience for cartoons is usually children and teenagers, and the theme of "life and death" always hurts their spirit and even brings them nightmares. The presentation of the underground world in film and television may frighten children, and parents avoid such themes. Therefore, the subject of death is rarely seen in traditional underage movies, and when it is occasionally explored, it is often expressed symbolically.

"Coco" combines "death" with film and animation, and the whole horror film successfully depicts the world of the undead, creating a warm and dreamy scene, showing a new and unique trend of plot development and change on the theme of "death". In this colourful underground world, death is no longer cold and bleak and even has the warmth of life. The film is 105 minutes long, with more than 70 minutes in the space of the dead. By cleverly borrowing from the real world of Mexico's Day of the Dead, director Lee Unkrich has made a courageous transformation of the world of the dead into a carnival, creating a vibrant and dynamic realm of the dead, which is a breakthrough in the film's strategy for the representation of the theme of death.

The “City of the Dead” created by Pixar Studios fundamentally overturned our childhood fixed perception of the “other world” the underground world is more dynamic than the real world; it is an extraordinary secret world. In the theatre, lighting effects include bright fireworks; in the light of the blooming marigold and candlelight, the tone is full of brilliant, not letting the audience perceive a hint of darkness and horror. The background music is bright and smooth, and everything is joyful and noisy. The central theme of “death theme” has a human warmth, turning “death” from cold, depressing and violent to warm, achieving a stunning film and television effect, thus suitable for children to watch, and in line with a standard “ family-friendly” animated film.

The order of the entrance to the Land of the Dead is well organized; connecting the yin and yang is a bridge of golden colour. When walking on the bridge, you can see the petals shining, and the colours are intense and dazzling, all composed of marigold crowns. Mexican tradition believes that marigolds can preserve the sun’s energy and thus illuminate the return of the dead to the earthly world. The human world is optimistic and peaceful with the joy and pleasure of the undead space.

The film’s characters are portrayed with distinct and convincing personalities, and the emotions of the dead have a human glow. The dead men, women and children take on skeletal faces, seemingly grotesque and horrific images but as full of human feelings as they are alive. The spirits of the dead live a happy life, almost forgetting the psychological disturbance of death to them; instead of saying that the underworld is hell, it is more like “another world”. Death is not so fearful; living in a dead world is also a beautiful life, even more unusual than the world of the living vibrant.

“Coco” puts forward an exciting assumption that death is not the end of the soul, the soul does not disappear, the dead depends on the memory of living relatives to maintain existence, once there is no one to miss or remember, the dead will ultimately usher in “death”. The ritual is not sad because of the memory of the departed loved ones. Still, it is filled with the happy atmosphere of reunion, highlighting the Mexican people’s relaxed and open-minded attitude towards life. In the romantic purple glow, the deceased dressed in festive attire, crossing the bridge made of marigold petals, returning home to reunite with their living relatives, singing and dancing all night long to celebrate the holiday. The world became a sea of revelry.

“Coco” combines the theme of “life and death” with “film and animation” in a fantastical imagination, which has a remarkable effect on the analysis of death and makes people feel warm. It enhances the audience’s deep understanding of life’s richness, meets audiences’ expectations and spiritual aspirations in different countries and regions, and achieves “family fun” in terms of animation promotion.

Cutting-edge Animation Technology to Create a Visual Feast

Pixar to devout work attitude, with the most advanced computer technology to fine-tune, for “Coco” to create an unprecedented scene of incredibly charming visual spectacle, to the audience to shape what can be called the most brilliant world of the undead in the history of cinema. The film’s special effects are complicated due to the pursuit of innovation and even extreme in many aspects. This is undoubtedly another masterpiece of animation production technology, defining Pixar’s technical field’s advantages and innovative qualities once again.

During the creation stage of “Coco”, the director envisioned to show the audience the underground world with splendid stunts, creatively projecting the “world of the living” into the “city of the dead” with imagery, ultimately creating a magnificent, warm and friendly city of the dead.

“Undead City” is made into a dazzling and charming Victorian-style future metropolis, with gorgeous and dreamy plazas, tall buildings lined up, well-connected traffic; everything is in order and full of hope and light. The “City of the Dead” is yellow, creating a peaceful and beautiful world. In the background design of the image expression, the world from a variety of theatre-style lighting and sparkling petal bridge, and then layered with a sense of tall and colourful buildings, have brought new challenges in technology. The undead film even has familiar architectural facilities, public elevators, commercial buildings, opera houses, customs agencies and other objects; build treatment are highly realistic.

The character design is very expressive, and all the details are repeatedly worked out. Under the 3D graphics designed by director Lee Unkrich, all the images can find prototypes in the living world, and this realistic feeling makes the audience want to touch this undead. The people in “City of the Dead” have a lovely skeletal appearance; the skeletons have 127 bones, 80 visible, and painted mouths, eyes, eyebrows, wrinkles on their faces, hair on their bodies, and fluttering folds of their clothes, all with excellent performance in detail. The undead is lively body movements, can cry and laugh, and even roll their eyes; this skeletal undead in many films become alive here, with a variety of expressions of joy, anger, sadness and shock, and even dancing, effectively setting a happy atmosphere.Miguel playing guitar fingering and strumming rhythm change processing fluent smooth is lifelike, the movement such as flowing water, those “singer” “security guard” “police officer” and so on are no different from real people, their rich exaggerated expressions let the audience feel surprised. In the story, the hero’s body gradually fades away like a fading peach blossom, gorgeous and poignant. All in all, the world of the Dead is a combination of sophisticated cartoony and a high degree of design, culminating in a fantastical feast of Mexican dead City that reaches the highest production level.

Conclusion

With the help of music and dreams, Pixar brings a novel and anti-canonical death lesson to the audience in the film, conveying the values of the Pixar team. As a typical case of multicultural transformation and integration, “Coco” uses Mexican elements freely in its subject matter, narrative background and colour, completing Pixar Animation Studio’s global transplantation of Mexican culture. The film will be a perfect combination of Mexican symbols with the mainstream values of the United States, the United States culture spread around the world. In this seemingly frightening story, “life and death” is re-told from a pleasant perspective, integrating the film’s literary, technical and entertainment aspects into one. When the development of animation technology is exquisite, compared with the advanced production concept and mature production, the connotation and spiritual essence of the film is the vitality of the film. The communication strategy with higher universal value, especially the praise and promotion of emotions, is the key for Pixar to achieve strong cross-cultural communication.

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