INS 101 & 102: Media Makeover Project Proposal

Title: The orientalism, individualistic heroism and gender representation problem occurred in Mulan 2020

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The orientalism, individualistic heroism and gender representation problem occurred in Mulan 2020

In the year of 2020, the movie *Mulan* in action showed in the cinema. Disney made the animated movie *Mulan (1998)*, it was a movie which was very popular. For remaking this classic animated movie, Disney hired a professional team, but no one was from China (Guyant, 2021, page 147). The problem is, this team didn’t know much about Chinese history, and tried to guess what Chinese people think with western mentality. This might win the succeed in western society, but based on the Chinese movie score website Doban, users gave a low score of 4.8/10 to *Mulan (2020)*.

To western society, be a soldier is a glory. So, the creators team surmise ancient Chinese want to be a soldier as well. What the creators didn’t know is, Mulan joined the army out of resignation. *The balled of Mulan* was a folk song in The Northern and Southern Dynasties (420-589), and according to *the balled of Mulan*, Mulan’s family didn’t have adult male except the father, and Mulan is the eldest female, so she decided replace his father fighting for the army. What should we focus is, his father was forced into the army by Khan. The team of Disney emphasized Mulan fight for bring glory to her family, I’m not totally agree, as the result Mulan brought glory to her family, but I don’t think Mulan was fight for glory. The balled of Mulan said, before joined the army, Mulan thought nothing, but sighed. If Mulan was seeking for glory, she should be very excited to be a soldier, because this could be an opportunity to bring glory to her family.

This is a kind of orientalism. Orientalism don’t have an authoritative and specific definition, in my opinion orientalism can be understanded as westerns use their own cultural background to guess the East and eastern culture. In the movie *Mulan (2020)*, the fact that the production team did not understand The Chinese culture and rushed to make the film was reflected in many aspects. For instance, According to Haynes (2020), Mulan was a NOMAD, but the movie showed Mulan lived in *Fujian Tulou*. *Fujian Tulou* listed in the world culture heritage in 2008 (UNESCO, n.d.), it is well known by the world, and is very characteristic, so Disney choose *Fujian Tulou* as the place where Mulan lived. In addition, *Fujian Tulou* was first recorded in 1559, which was later 1000 years than the story of Mulan. However, as a NOMAD, Mulan should live in a kind of tent. The job of NOMAD is grazing, they migrate on the steppe for finding the good grass to feed their live-stocks (New internationalist, n.d.), they lived in tents to help them migrate easier. Another improper point is, After Mulan told the general Khan’s plan, the general led the troop to home city without the older from emperor. In ancient China, if a general violate the emperor (include action without older), he will suffer a huge publishment. The general’s behavior in *Mulan (2020)* is totally a western assumption about Chinese people, and Western individual heroism was impossible in ancient China.

In my media makeover project, I will focus on the gender problem showed in *Mulan (2020)*. *Mulan (2020)* made the same problem as *Super Woman*, the movie give the main female character some special capacity to stand out her excellent. *Super Woman* is easy to recognized because Diana has super power and went beyond the human. Mulan seems do not have special ability, but she still exceeded almost everyone in *Mulan (2020)*. She can escape from avalanche by riding a horse, in reality this is impossible. Chinese culture pursues team work, but in *Mulan (2020)*, what can we see is Mulan saved the whole country by her own power. This is unreal and have no reference value for most of the woman in the world. This can only exist in the film.

The most significant thing is, the creators team emphasized the female character of Mulan overmuch, which made the opposite effect. What creators team wanted to show is, Mulan get a new life when she recognized she is a woman. This is the understanding of western people, However, according to *the balled of Mulan*, Mulan joined the army for over 20 years, but her colleague didn’t know she is a woman, until she dressed up as a woman. What Chinese understanding the gender topic on Mulan is, Mulan really acted like a man, who only relied on her own ability. Mulan wasn’t super woman, she didn’t need to be highlighted, she was just an ordinary woman, but she did just as well as the men around him.

My media makeover project plans to recreate the scenario which Mulan came out as a woman. I want to make Mulan’s female character more realistic that have the great value for most of the woman in the world, not only exist in the film, and will reproduce the description in the balled of Mulan, make a micro film of Mulan went back to home. I planned to make up Mulan as a man at first, then changed Mulan into woman character. I want to emphasize the surprise of Mulan’s colleagues that they didn’t know Mulan is a woman for over 20 years. I want to use the one-shot technique, and I am making the plan with my team more detailed. I decide to choose the house I lived as the filming location. Because of the limit of budget, we can’t perfectly remake every detail of Mulan, we will try our best, and mainly focus on the gender topic of Mulan.

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