



東海大學學生報告 ePaper

以女性主義的角度探討木蘭詩與迪士尼改編動畫花木
蘭的關係

From Original Mulan Ballad to Disney's Adaptation in
Feminist Perceptions

作者：劉力琦、戴書琳、謝宛盈、楊育旻、杜昀叡、黃靖雅、朱祐嫻

系級：外文二 B 與 外文四 A、B

學號：991258、1001025、1001239、1001203、1021026、1021049、1021024

開課老師：陳玫樺

課程名稱：研究方法

開課系所：外文系

開課學年：103 學年度 第 二 學期

中文摘要

在迪士尼系列電影中，花木蘭是唯一一個以中國思想為背景的故事，緣自於木蘭詩，但在改編的過程中不免添上些西方色彩。木蘭詩主要是提倡孝道，但在西方的觀點層面來說，花木蘭這個角色突顯了女性主義的價值。此論文的目的是剖析迪士尼動畫中的女性主義是如何塑造出花木蘭這位鮮明的角色，並討論他在改編的過程當中所添加的元素，提供讀者在觀賞花木蘭這部動畫有不一樣的觀點思考中西文化的差異。此論文主要是透過以下三個提問與資料蒐集進行印證：原版與迪士尼改編版木蘭的角色設定與個性的差異為何？男女關係在原版與改編版的不同之處分別是如何刻劃的？迪士尼加了那些元素始的花木蘭如何突顯其女性主義的價值？在研究的過程中主要是研讀木蘭詩與迪士尼花木蘭相關期刊進行分析與比較，最後以論證作為總結。研究結果顯示迪士尼改編版的花木蘭在追求自我實現、婚姻自由上有所著墨，並添加了小動物、男女戀愛，以及最終贏得勝利等，迪士尼式的幸福快樂的結局收尾，吸引觀眾。

關鍵字：花木蘭、迪士尼、女性主義、木蘭詩

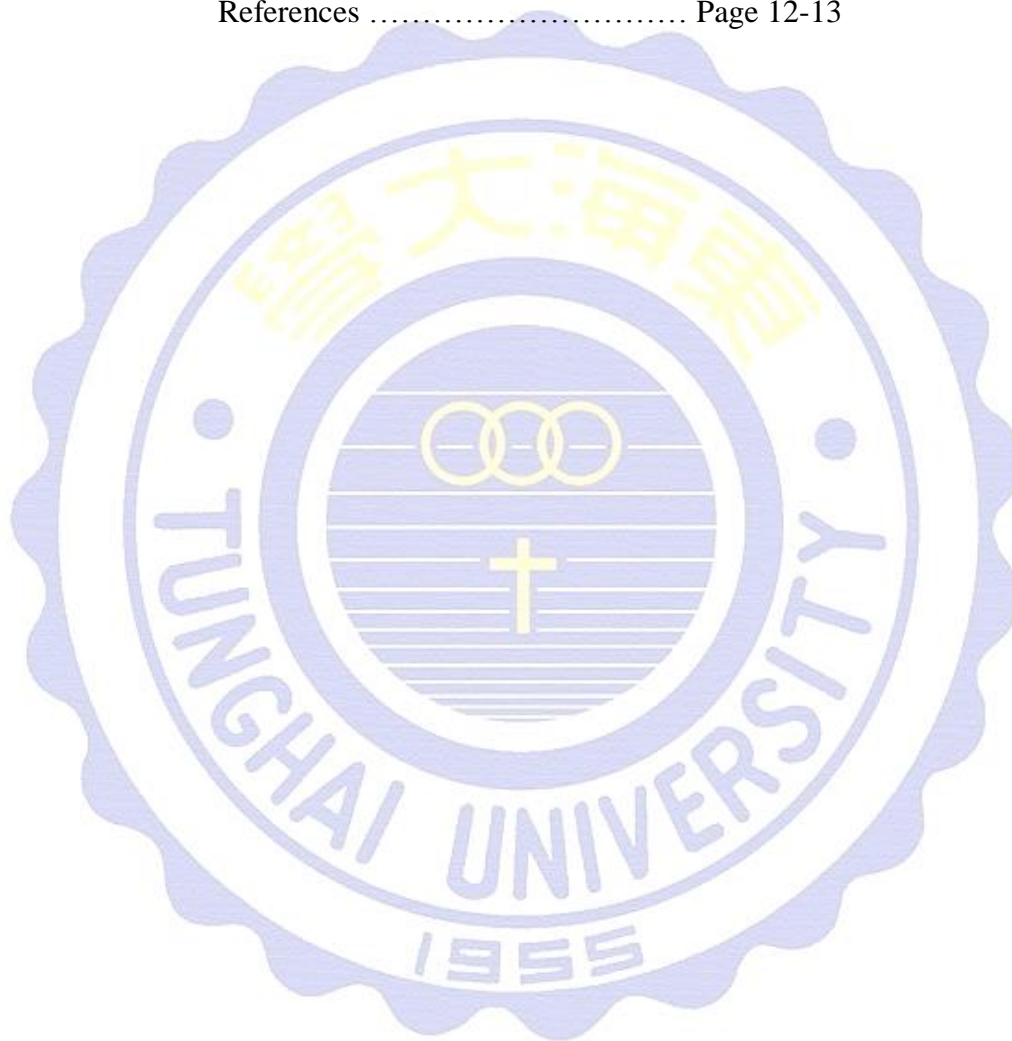
Abstract

In Disney animations, Mulan is the only one that was adapted from Chinese culture. Being originated from Mulan Ballad, the Disney adapted version includes not only Chinese culture but also Western elements. In Chinese perceptive, Mulan replaced her elder father to join the army is regarded as filial piety, while the Westerner see it as a way of a woman warrior and self-fulfillment. In other words, feminism was added to the adaption of the animation. The purpose of this paper is to compare and analyze the differences between original Mulan ballad and Disney adapted animation. The main focus is on feminism in Disney adapted Mulan, how Disney makes Mulan more independent, and have stronger self-fulfillment.

Keyword : Mulan, Disney, Feminist

目 次

Introduction	Page 4
Method	Page 4
Results	Page 5-10
Conclusion	Page 10-11
References	Page 12-13



From Original Mulan Ballad to Disney's Adaptation in Feminist Perceptions

Introduction

Providing a Brief Summary

We are interested in how feminism influences a certain protagonist in the Disney adaptation. As a result, the topic of feminism in Disney was come up with by us. Then we all know that women were bounded by the conservative society which asked them to follow the old traditions seriously. That is why most of stories have sexual prejudice on women. In our research paper, we also want to discuss how Disney illustrated the woman in their plays. To show the biggest difference, our group chose Mulan as our researched topic. There are two reasons, one is Mulan ballad is a Chinese literal creation which may develop its unique feature from the Western one. And the other is how Disney Company illustrated this main character from the original version. Therefore, we would analyze these two aspects deeply and lead a result to make inference.

Body

Compare and contrast issues, critical views, and literary characters
Ask Questions and Provide Answers

Method

We use the comparing and contrast method to see the differences between original Mulan ballad and Disney adapted animation. Our main focus is on feminism in Disney adapted Mulan, how Disney makes Mulan more independent, and have stronger self-fulfillment. Therefore whether Disney has been Americanized comparing to the original Chinese ballad isn't our focus, but we use some of the ideas to help us develop our research. In addition, we also use another method by asking questions and providing answers. We listed out the three main questions for our research: How does the personality of Disney's Mulan differs from original Mulan? And how is the relationship between male and female through original Mulan and Disney's version? Also, how Disney formula plays its role in the adaption of Mulan with feminism? We use online sources and journals to help us develop our research.

Results

How does the personality of Disney's Mulan differ from that of the original Mulan?

Comparing the two versions of Mulan's story, readers can find that Mulan's personality in Disney adaptation is obviously fairly different from that of the original poem. Mulan embraces the virtue of traditional filial piety in the poem, whereas in the Disney movie, she tends to possess characteristics of an independent nature. ([1] Quan 2010) ([2] Baron, Lee, Yearby 2010) In the original poem, Mulan joins the army out of her worries for her father. According to the poem,

“The Khan is calling many troops,
The army list is in twelve scrolls,
On every scroll there's Father's name.
Father has no grown-up son,
Mu-lan has no elder brother.
I want to buy a saddle and horse,
And serve in the army in Father's place.”
([3] Frankel 1976)

Since Mulan does not have any elder brothers, when the war breaks out, the only grown man in the family that can join the army is her father who happens to be too old to fight. In the era Mulan lives in, every family has to send a man to serve in the army. It would be considered against the law if a grown man refuses to join the troops. ([4] Chen 2010) Deeply influenced by traditional Chinese values, Mulan decides to cross-dress and substitutes for her father. ([5] Feng 2003) She follows the rule that children should be filial to the elders, which could be viewed as a more passive motivation.

On the contrary, not only does Disney's Mulan join the army for her father but she is also determined to achieve self-actualization. ([6] Klein 1998) "Maybe I didn't go for my Father. Maybe what I really wanted was to prove I could do things right. So when I looked in the mirror, I'd see someone worthwhile." said Mulan. ([7] Disney script) In the movie, Mulan does not possess the typical characteristics of a traditional woman in Chinese culture. ([1] Quan 2010) "Disney's Mulan has the mind of a superhero," ([8] Chan 2001). We can see that in one scene, she is scolded by the matchmaker for not following the standards of the society in the beginning of the story. Hence, she feels ashamed and does not know who she can be for the rest of her life. In order to prove to herself and to everyone else besides finding her own identity, Mulan decides to take her father's place and join the army. Even when she is struggles with the hardships of being in the army, she never gives up. Instead, Mulan does her best to toughen up, comes out

on top, and becomes one of the bravest soldiers in the troops. This shows that Disney adds a western value of individualism into its adaptation of Mulan, which greatly emphasizes the feminist side of Mulan. As Cassandra Stover disserts in her research, “Mulan Consciously questions her cross-dressing motives, wondering if she did it not to save her family but because it was the only way to make something of her life.” ([9] Stover 2013) Not only does she serve in the army for her father, she also does it to prove to herself that she is capable of doing what is considered a man’s duty in her culture.

It is evident that Mulan has a different personality in the original poem compared to that of the Disney’s version. “In all the Chinese versions, Mulan, neither romanticized nor glamorized, is depicted as a survivor, not a superhero.” “Only Disney’s version glamorizes its protagonist and her victory to fulfill a heroic fantasy.” ([10] Cheu 2007) The original Mulan has a more passive personality than that of Disney’s. Because she is portrayed as the daughter who serves in the army only because of the value of filial piety, while Disney’s Mulan has a more specific goal to achieve, and attempts to find her own voice in the society.

What is the relationship between male and female in the original Mulan and the Disney version?

To answer this question, we analyze two important issues about male and female, one is the concept of marriage, and the other one is female living with males, like Mulan did in the army.

As the Disney films’ happily ever after endings, young female protagonists are pursuing “heterosexual romance and marital happiness as the ultimate goals” ([11] Cheung 2005). In the original *Mulan Ballad* and the Disney adapted Mulan both have a different view in pursuing the goal of getting happily married. Mulan represents a girl that pursues more about self-identity than mere happy marriage. However, in the adapted film, Mulan faces a greater objection from the tradition image of a female should be like. And we can know what kind of girl Mulan is and the concept of marriage from the analysis of *Mulan Ballad* and the Disney adapted Mulan.

For the other important issue in Mulan’s story is how Mulan lives with a group of men, disguising herself as a man and blending into the army. It is the most interesting part for the audiences to see how Mulan conquers the difficulties of blending herself into men, the cross-dressing life she has in the army, and carefully not to violate the gender taboos ([12] Edwards 2010).

The concept of marriage

We can see two different concepts of marriage and the interaction between male and female in both the original texts and the Disney adapted version. In the original version, as a sign of woman ([13] Cowie 1978), Mulan is a traditional woman character. In the beginning of the Mulan Ballad, Mulan is weaving beside the window, and it is an image of the women in the traditional Chinese society. At the end of the poem, Mulan changes herself back to the woman feature, by putting on her own clothes and makeup.

“I take off my wartime gown
And put on my old-time clothes.
Facing the window she fixes her cloudlike hair,
Hanging up a mirror she dabs on yellow flower powder
She goes out the door and sees her comrades.
Her comrades are all amazed and perplexed.”

([3] Frankel 1976)

However, in the beginning of the Disney's film, when Mulan is instructed by the women in her family to meet the matchmaker and prepares to get married, she struggles to memorize the moral injunction for women, thus she writes down cheat notes on her arms. This scene indicates that she does not fit the typical female image of traditional Chinese woman. She also prays to her ancestors to protect her so she won't dishonor her family. In the film, if a girl does not behave well and gets married as instructed, she is viewed as a girl who brings dishonor and shame to the family. “A girl can bring her family great honor in one way by striking a good match” ([7] Disney script). About what kind of girl that would please men's heart, that “men want girls with good taste, calm, obedient, work fast-paced, with good breeding and a tiny waist”, and “like a lotus blossom soft and pale ([7] Disney script 1998).” Even though she tries hard to please the matchmaker, she fails and accidentally ruins the whole matchmaking process. We then see that she is disappointed in herself, and further questions her own identity, because she does not fit the perfect image of what an obedient woman should be in her culture. She sings “I will never pass for a perfect bride or a perfect daughter... if I were truly to be myself I would break my family's heart... Why is my reflection someone I don't know? Somehow I cannot hide, who I am though I've tried ([7] Disney script 1998).” Even her ancestors think she is a failure and brings shame to the family. Not only in the part of depicting traditional concept of marriage, the film also touches upon the element of marriage in the army. On the way to war, Mulan's fellow soldiers start singing a song about fighting for their love. They express the reason why they are heading to war is because of the girls that are “worth fighting for”. And the girl must possess certain features like “paler than the moon with eyes that shine like stars”, “will marvel at my strength, adore my battle scars”, “it all depends on what she cooks like”.

This particular image not only tells of what these men look for in women but also what the society approves of when it comes to marrying the right woman. When Mulan asks them whether they would consider marrying a girl who is straightforward, and always speaks her mind, the fellow soldiers express that they despise this kind of girl, which is exactly the kind of girl Mulan is. Although the scene tells us what men look for in a woman, the context does not fit the traditional concept of men heading to war. In traditional Chinese culture, men go to war because of honor and status. “Fighting for a lady is known even in China as being part of the life of an ancient European knight, and has become one of the symbols of medieval culture. In ancient China, soldiers were always encouraged to fight for promotion and a higher rank” ([14] Tang 2008). Ancient Chinese men would not fight for girls like the European knights express chivalry, Chinese men would fight only for status and honor.

Living with men

In the original poem, Mulan reveals her identity after she goes back home, and her fellow soldiers are astonished by her true identity as a female. However, in the Disney’s film, Mulan strives to fit in with the rest of the soldiers, which is an all-male environment. She puts on the heavy armor and tries to talk and act like a man. Before her enrollment in the army, Mushu advises Mulan to act normal and mingle with her fellow soldiers. By using different body languages like standing straight, walking with confident and spitting while speaking, or talking in low and manly voices, or using vulgar language. Mulan is shocked by the fact that for the first time she sees how men are, and although she is disgusted by them, Mushu expresses that it is normal for men, and that Mulan has to get used to this kind of living style. Whether the funny scenes are authentic or not for men in that era, they are the interpretations from the Disney’s company for depicting the difficulties for a female like Mulan who wants to disguise herself as a man. Evidently, certain elements in the adapted film are not true to that in the traditional Chinese culture. Such as Mulan embracing her fellow soldiers, and even bear-hugging the emperor at the end of the story. In ancient China, male and female were not allowed to have intimate interaction that involve fondling and hugging, or the female will be viewed as a disgrace to the family and to herself. Not to mention embracing the emperor with both arms and full body contact. The ancient Chinese emperors were viewed as gods, and if normal people were to touch the emperor, he or she would be committing serious crimes. Not to mention the scene where the emperor bows to Mulan is definitely unrealistic. All of this is just an interpretation from the western tradition that all human kinds are equal ([15] Wei 2003).

How Disney formula plays its role in the adaption of Mulan with feminism?

Disney attempts to create a smoother storyline by adding some fairy tale elements. The formula generally includes individualism, the triumph of good over evil, young romance and the use of animals as sidekicks. ([16] Xu 2013) As in Disney adaption of Mulan, these fairytale elements were added to the movie to attract the audience. These interesting elements include animal characters, young romance and the quest for self-fulfillment.

Fairytale elements often include the use of animals in accompany with the protagonist. In Disney adapted Mulan, a cute tiny cricket, a loyal horse and a tiny dragon, Mushu, are by Mulan's side all throughout their adventures. In Disney's fantasy world, the aids to the hero or heroine are invariably friendly and are usually cute creatures, adding an appeal for young viewers and comic relief for older ones. ([16] Xu 2013) Mushu being the funny dragon that he is, serves as an alarm clock that wakes Mulan up every morning and motivates Mulan, constantly encouraging her that she can perform as well as males do. In other words, Mushu plays its character as a stepping stone that helps Mulan become not only independent but also a heroine figure. Therefore, these animal characters are there to enhance Mulan's ability to become a woman warrior.

Young Romance is also another common formula that makes Disney animations so popular. The original ballad of Mulan did not have this kind of romance, it only describes Mulan joining the war for his father. Therefore, one of the biggest changes Disney makes in its adaptation is adding the male protagonist, Captain Li Shang, to the movie. This new character presents the romantic side to the story. While most of Disney's princesses are portrayed as beautiful but weak who are eventually in need of their princes to the rescue, Mulan on the other hand is independent and intelligent. There is a strong sense of gender equality in Mulan's plot where Mulan is constantly proving to herself and everyone else that she can be just as strong if not stronger and better than the other males, which are qualities that catch Captain Li Shang's attention. Eventually, they fall in love with each other.

There are small differences between the original Mulan Ballad and the Disney adapted animation in view of Mulan's fulfillment. Mulan, the warrior maiden who performed heroic deeds in battle while dressed as a male soldier, has had many incarnations from her first appearance as a heroine in an ancient Chinese folk ballad. Mulan's story was retold for centuries, extolling the filial virtue of the young woman who placed her father's honor and well-being above her own. ([17] Dong 2011) But in the adaption of Disney, it rather focus on Mulan her own self-fulfillment. In most Disney animations, the protagonists have to go through a series of difficulties first

before reaching their goals or fulfilling their dreams. And self-fulfillment is certainly one important dream of Mulan's. The plot begins with a matchmaker who wishes to strike a good match for her, however, Mulan messes it up, which is humiliating for the family. As a woman, she cannot be a potential bride, on the other hand, as a daughter; she cannot glorify her family's honor. ([18] Suprajitno 2014) Therefore, Mulan disguises herself as a man to join the army while taking her father's place. This gives her the chance to bring honor to the family and wipes out the disgrace that she brings for not being the "perfect bride". Therefore, joining the army isn't only a way to save his elderly father from being enlisted, but also a way to save herself from being a perfect bride. ([19] Lin 2012) She overcomes her difficulties in the army and performs just as well as men, which also stands as a part of self-fulfillment. Later in the movie, Mulan not only helps the dynasty win the war against the Hans but also saves the emperor. And this time, she is honored by the emperor, and praised by the people. Her self-fulfillment further brings honor back to her family while allowing her find out who she really is.

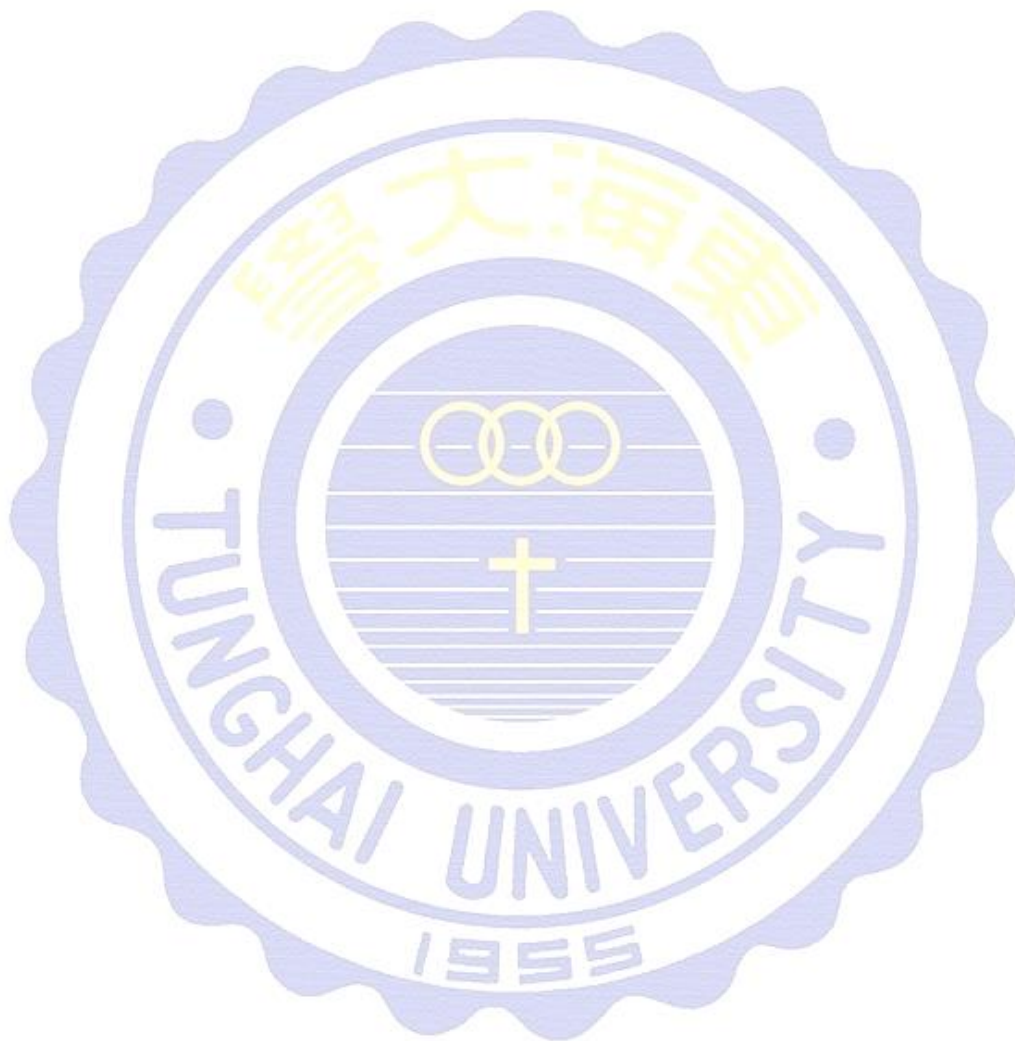
Accompanied by her small dragon, Mulan saves the Emperor and wins the heart of Captain Li Shang. ([20] Hsieh 2012) Animal characters, young romances, and self-fulfillment are the three important elements that Disney add to the movie. These formulas help build the character of Mulan as a feminist, who proves to herself and owns the right in finding her true love. Like all Disney movies with a happy ending, Mulan is rewarded with her love captain Li Shang. However, the small differences that set Mulan's happy ending apart from the other movies is not because the villain get caught and are severely punished, but because she finally brings honors to her family, while achieving self-actualization.

Conclusion

Providing a Brief Summary

In conclusion, the Disney adapted version of Mulan adds the idea of feminism to set the film apart from traditional poem of Mulan Ballad. For example, the personality of Disney's Mulan is independent and the motivation for her to join the army contains a sense of self-fulfillment. The western value of individualism is added in the film. Second, the status of woman figure in the film is higher than the traditional version. In the western society, people head to the war in other to protect the women instead of only for honor. Also, in the end of the film, Mulan embrace her fellow soldiers and the emperor as well. Disney express not only the idea of sexual opening but also all human kinds are equal. What's more, Disney adds the animal characters, young

romances and self-fulfillment to make Mulan a new heroic feminist who has her own right to find her true love.



參考文獻

- [1] Quan, Li-Feng. “美國動畫片《花木蘭》與中國《木蘭詩》中所蘊含的女性意識” *Journal of Shaanxi Youth Vocational College* Vol 1, No 1 (2010) 77-80. Print.
- [2] Baron Samantha, Lee Youjin, Yerby Amanda. “Gender roles in Disney Animation.” American University Washington DC. American University, 10 June 2010. Web. 17 June 2015.
- [3] Frankel, Han H. “The Flowering Plum and the Palace Lady: Interpretations of Chinese Poetry.” New Haven: Yale University Press. (1976). Print.
- [4] Chen, Chongjie; Selvi, and Mariza, Vika Bregas. “Analysis of Mulan’s Image” *Jurnal Lingua Cultura* Vol 4, No 1 (2010) 71-77. Print.
- [5] Feng, Lan. “The Female Individual and the Empire: A Historicist Approach to Mulan and Kingston’s Woman Warrior.” In *Comparative Literature*, Vol. 55, No.3. Oregon: Duke University Press, 2003. 229-245. Print.
- [6] Klein, Andy. "Disney's Mulan: A More Modern Heroine." *Animation World Magazine*. July 1998: n. pag. Web. 17 Jun 2015.
- [7] Mulan. Dir. Tony Bancroft and Barry Cook. Perf. Ming-Na, Lea Salonga, and Eddie Murphy. Walt Disney Home Video, 1998.
- [8] Chan, Joseph and McIntyre, Bryce (Eds). “In Search of Boundaries: Communication, Nation-State and Cultural Identities.” Norwood, NJ: Greenwood, 2001. Print.
- [9] Stover, Cassandra. “Damsels and Heroines: The Conundrum of the Post-Feminist Disney Princess” *LUX: A Journal of Transdisciplinary Writing and Research from Claremont Graduate University* Vol 2: Iss 1, Article 29 (2013). Print.
- [10] Cheu, Hoi F. “Feminist Film Theory and the Postfeminist Era: Disney’s Mulan.” In *Cinematic Howling: Women's Films, Women's Film Theories*. Vancouver: UBC Press. (2007) 1-20. Print.
- [11] Cheung, Ting-yan. “Reading beyond ‘Happily Ever After’: Refiguring the Disney Narrative of Femininity.” *The University of Hong Kong*. (2005). Print.
- [12] Edwards, Louise. “The Transformation of the Woman Warrior Hua Mulan: from Defender of the Family to Servant of the State”. *Hong Kong University*. (2010). Print.
- [13] Cowie, Elizabeth. “Woman as Sign” (1978). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990. Print.
- [14] Tang, Jun. “A Cross-Cultural Perspective on Production and Reception of Disney’s Mulan through Its Chinese Subtitles” *European Journal of English Studies*, vol. 12, (2008) 149-162. Print.
- [15] 魏士傑. “試論中國文學下的木蘭故事及迪士尼動畫下的花木蘭”. 國立暨南

國際大學中國語文學系學士論文. (2003). Print.

- [16] Xu, Ming-yu, and Chuan-mao Tian. "Cultural deformations and reformulations: a case study of Disney's Mulan in English and Chinese." Taylor and Francis Ltd. Dec. (2013) 183-184. Print.
- [17] Dong, Lan. "Mulan's Legend and Legacy in China and the United States." Temple University Press (2011) 2. Print
- [18] Christina, Christina, and Setefanus, Suprajitno. "The Americanization of Confucian Filial Piety in Disney's Mulan (1998)" K@ta Kita Vol 2, No 2 (2014) 33. Print.
- [19] Lin, Shu-Yun. "Intertextually among Heterogeneous Texts: a Study of Mulan Poem and Disney Mulan." 東華中文學報, 第五期, (2012) 18. Print.
- [20] Hsieh, Ivy Haoyin, Marylou M. Matoush. "Filial Daughter, Woman Warrior, or Identity-Seeking Fairytale Princess: Fostering Critical Awareness Through Mulan." Springer Science+Business Media, LLC (2012) 219. Print.

