



Intergenerational Cultural Dissonance in Film

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Who are you? When you introduce yourself, what do you say? You probably include some information about where you are from. It may be the first thing you say. Our origins are often the foundation of our lives. This is what my research is centered around.

Intergenerational cultural dissonance (ICD) is a “clash between parents and children over cultural values” (Choi et al. 85). It almost always results from migration. Considering the various environments to which young immigrants have been exposed, and the discrimination they may face, the development of a coherent cultural identity is a challenging task (Maehler et al. 19).

To share my experience with ICD, I aimed to use a cultural figurine to symbolize this dissonance. Thus, bringing attention to intergenerational cultural dissonance in a shorter, simpler, and creative way.

THE STORY



Figure 1: Black Maneki Neko

After breaking a Maneki Neko, a 1st generation immigrant is cursed with a dehumanizing fate. What is a Maneki Neko? They are also known as ‘Lucky Cats’ or ‘Beckoning Cats’. They are believed to bring good luck to their owners. They vary in meaning depending on the color and which hand is raised. In my film, *Good Luck Kitty*, a black Maneki Neko was chosen. Black Maneki Nekos are believed to ward off evil spirits.

The Maneki Neko served as a symbol of the cultural roots of the main character: Tori played by Rebekah Moon. Tori is a Japanese American college student trying to navigate her life. She struggles with her identity because she feels too Japanese to be American and too American to be Japanese. This creates a barrier between her and her grandmother:



Figure 2: Rebekah Moon



Figure 3: Ayako Darley

Yui, played by Ayako Darley. Yui sends Tori a package from Japan, with the figurine inside. She also sends a letter talking about its significance. She writes about how to take care of it: dusting it often and not altering its appearance.

However, Tori does not bother reading the letter. Instead, she quickly unwraps her new ‘toy’ and decorates it with false eyelashes. Quickly after receiving her new gift, Tori has a day of bad luck. Her date cancels on her, she burns her hand, stubs her toe, and breaks her laptop.

In a fit of frustration, she throws the Maneki Neko at the wall, breaking it. Then very odd things begin happening to Tori. She loves the taste of milk, she has scratches all over her neck, coughs up a hairball, and is afraid of dogs.

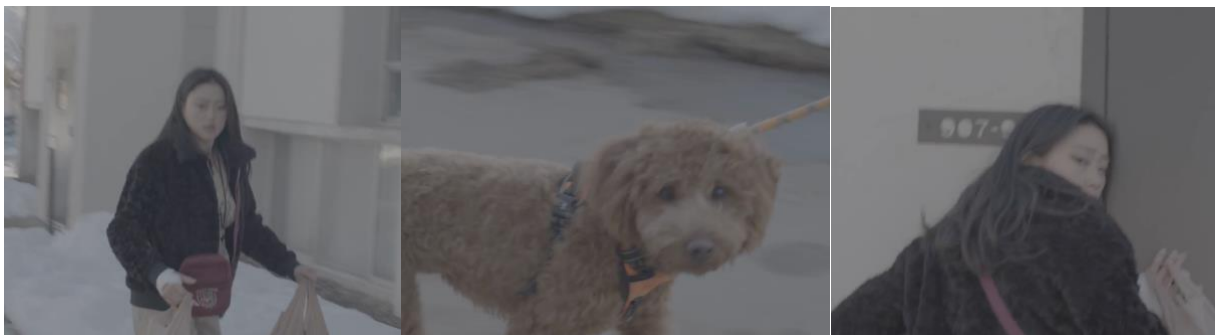


Figure 4: Rebekah Moon and Chewie

She brushes it off and decides to just get some sleep. Everything is okay, right? Well, remember the dehumanizing fate? In the morning when Tori wakes up, she can sense something is wrong. She looks down at her body. A cat arm on the right. A cat arm on the left. Fur everywhere. She has turned into a cat.

WHY



Figure 5: Milk Scene



Figure 6: Claw Scratches

Why make this film? Think back to the earlier question. Who are you?

No matter where we come from, whether that is here in Salt Lake City or halfway across the world, we should cherish and put effort into understanding it. Cooking those meals, learning part of all of that language, and speaking to our relatives about their customs and their lives in their home countries. Because otherwise, we lose part of our cultural identity and a part of ourselves.

In my film, is quite literally.



REFERENCES

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