

The Analysis of Color Narration of Animated Film *Ne Zha*

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Color has an intuitive expression of the material world, and is often used by creators of animated films in the narrative process of the film to express a creator's subjective feelings. Color narration is a special mental imagination activity. It mainly refers to human beings perceiving colors in the external environment, and judging by their own rich life experience, and finally achieving a comprehensive cognition of external things. The animated film *Ne Zha* has attracted the attention of the audience since its release. That is because the film uses color narration ingeniously to innovate traditional stories and familiar characters, it displays the story through shocking visual expression, so that the audience can feel the influence of traditional culture while understanding the story, reflecting the unique artistic charm of color narration. This paper analyzes three aspects of color narration in showing the binary oppositions of goodness and evil, portraying vivid characters, promoting the development of narration, and highlighting the tension of the film, and fully expounds the importance of color narration in animated films.

Keywords: animated film, *Ne Zha*, color narration, visual expressiveness, character shaping

I. Introduction

Color is an artistic element that can directly express material life, and it plays an important role in the intuitive expression of the material world. Because of its intuitive expression of the material world, it is often used by creators of animated film in the narrative process of the film to express their subjective feelings. Color allows the screen pictures to have richer language expression, and more vividly conveys the subjective emotions of creation, such as happiness, anger, sorrow, and joy. Moreover, color is closely related to the people's daily life and has an irreplaceable value beyond other languages and expressions. The animated film *Ne Zha* (Chinese: 哪吒之魔童降世; literally: "Birth of the demon child Nezha") has attracted the attention of the audience since its release. That is because the film uses color narration ingeniously to innovate traditional stories and familiar characters, it displays the story through shocking visual expression, so that the audience can feel the influence of traditional culture while understanding the story, reflecting the unique artistic charm of color narration.

Animated film as a type of film in the film industry, whether the application of black and white color in the early days or the performance of color 3D animation we see today, can be find that color plays a very important role in the creative process. The color in the animated film is designed by the creator according to the needs of the film plot. Its purpose is to help the film create a specific environment and reflect the film's artistic connotation; at the same time, color can play a role in conveying emotions, creating atmosphere, promoting the development of

the plot and arousing emotional resonance from the audience in the narrative process. People's cognition of color is a process of human beings' universal perception of their surrounding environment, but it can arouse endless reveries of the audience by connecting various colors with a variety of life experiences. A certain overlap between the life experience and the color received by the human eyes will cause people to pay attention to the surrounding environment, so as to achieve the purpose of generating a certain emotion.

Color narration is a special mental imagination activity. It mainly refers to human beings perceiving colors in the external environment, and judging by their own rich life experience, and finally achieving a comprehensive cognition of external things. Human perception of color is divided into two steps: the first step is to accept the direct stimulation of external colors, which will produce a basic outline in the audience's mind and realize the basic understanding of things; the second step is to connect with life experience, combine the life experience with accepted external colors to achieve the purpose of showing the whole picture of things. Color plays a role in promoting the development of the film's story, highlighting the theme, and shaping a bright image in the narrative process of the film. It is because of these functions that it is often used by animated film directors to express the theme and narrative expression of animated films.

Ne Zha is a 2019 Chinese 3D computer animation fantasy adventure film directed and written by Jiaozi. The film tells the growth story of Nezha, who was born as a Demon Orb and is unwilling to the arrangements of fate and struggled to fight against it. This film uses traditional Chinese myths as the basic framework, conveying a theme of resistance to challenge the destiny. The film uses bright colors to shape the character image, creating a "defamiliarized" screen visual image; the world in the ink landscape painting makes people shine, and the fairyland-like environment makes people yearn for. Let the audience get a kind of aesthetic enjoyment after experiencing tense mood swings, and also make the film have a "magic brush Ma Liang"-like imagination space, which enhances the visual shock of the film and highlights the film's unique color narrative charm.

II. Color Shows the Binary Oppositions of Goodness and Evil

The expression of goodness and evil in *Nezha* is very wonderful, showing the audience the value concept of the binary oppositions of goodness and evil. Colors have their own symbolic meanings, but they have opposite meanings when used at different moments.

The main color is the most characteristic form of color expression in a film. It can be used to shape the main characters and will appear with the appearance of the main characters. Generally, the main color of a film is single, but there are special circumstances in different types of films. *Ne Zha* belongs to this particular type of film. In the film, there are two main characters Nezha and Ao Bing. They have completely different personalities, so the director considers using color contrast to portray their two different personalities when setting up the characters. Nezha's enthusiastic red and Ao Bing's deep and calm blue formed a sharp contrast, showing people their completely different personalities all the time.

Red is the main color of Nezha, and as Nezha's personality changes, it also shows different meanings. Nezha, as the incarnation body of the Demon Orb, made a big joke to the citizens of Chentangguan when his first appearance for his looks and behaviors, causing panic to the people. He regarded as a monster by the people and was not accepted by the people. The red on Nezha made the audience feel Nezha's inner loneliness, and also laid the groundwork for his giving himself up. On the day of his third birthday, he bravely challenged his destiny,

saved the lives of the people of Chentangguan, and completed the salvation of his own life. Nezha's red cloak is a symbol of Nezha's courage to challenge his destiny. Red, as a color with a sense of power, gave Nezha the ability to realize his own value, turning him from a demon boy feared by everyone to a hero admired by everyone.

Blue is mainly embodied in Ao Bing. Ao Bing was originally the reincarnation of the Spirit Pearl, a symbol of goodness. Blue in his body embodies the meaning of an infinite yearning for freedom, but because he is burdened with the heavy responsibility of rescuing the dragon from the sea of suffering, when his identity was exposed, he chose to sacrifice the people of Chentangguan to keep himself safe. At this moment, the feeling that blue gives people is no longer freedom, but infinite depression. At the end of the film, when Ao Bing uses the armor made of scales from more than ten thousand dragons to resist the catastrophe, it also shows Ao Bing's persistence to his kind heart. In the battle scene of the ending, the film highlights the fierce battle with true colors, showing the scene of Nezha and Ao Bing fighting for their own goals in front of the audience, allowing the audience to experience the different ideas in the hearts of different people, interpreting the dualistic theory of goodness and evil from a more profound perspective.

The environmental color is an indispensable form of color in a film. It can be used to express the atmosphere of the film in a specific environment and portray the psychological changes of the characters at that time. The environmental color will appear in the form of an overall tone, and will produce certain changes with the passage of time and the changes in the mood of the characters. The environmental colors in *Ne Zha* are expressed in the form of contrast between cool and warm colors. The surroundings of Ao Bing are mainly decorated with cool colors, which are used to show that Ao Bing is carrying a heavy burden, highlighting Ao Bing's depression in life and his desire for freedom. Although Nezha also has cool colors around him, it is mainly a warm color environment, which shows people that although Nezha is not accepted by the people of Chentangguan, he still has his own family affection. The contrast of the two different environmental colors also perfectly shows the environment in which Nezha and Ao Bing are located, so that the audience can understand and recognize them from the depths.

III. Color Portrays Vivid Characters

Animated film pays attention to the performance of color in character portrayal. As an excellent Chinese animated film, *Ne Zha* avoids the creation of stereotype characters, and uses the meaning of colors in different environments to portray vivid character image. Color has a certain directional nature, each color represents a meaning, and each character has its own color symbol. In the process of creating film works, the director will use the symbolic meaning of color to create character images. The use of color to shape the image of a character is achieved by controlling the hue, brightness and purity of the color. In addition, the character design should consider the partial application of color, and the partial treatment of color determines the image and personality of the character. In *Ne Zha* whether the enthusiastic red of Nezha or the deep and calm blue of Ao Bing, it is the partial treatment of such colors that perfectly shows their own personalities, creates a perfect visual image.

Color is a typical aesthetic symbol, through which the creator's unique aesthetic thinking can be expressed and a certain creative style can be formed. Different colors have different symbolic meanings in the film. The warm colors of red and yellow in *Ne Zha* show the audience the strong affection between Li Jing couple and Nezha and the sincere friendship between Nezha and Ao Bing; the blue appearance of Ao Bing combined with

the environment can clearly make the audience understand his loneliness and his infinite desire for freedom. The main function of decorative colors is to adorn the details that cannot be expressed in the film, and to provide more emotional changes for the film in the narrative process. It is the most widely used in film and television, and this type of color will express different emotions due to different factors such as regional customs, national traditions, and national ideas. *Ne Zha* adopts the traditional Chinese color red in the decoration color. This decorative color shows the warm and touching affection between Li Jing couple and Nezha, and also establishes a kind of emotional tone of unwillingness of bowing to destiny, made the audience feel the intense struggle of Nezha's inner world.

Nezha's first appearance in the film was as a mischievous devil who creates chaos. Because he was born as a Demon Orb, he has been regarded as a monster by the people of Chentangguan since his birth. No matter how hard he tried, he could not be accepted by the people. He once fell into a state of giving himself up. The red clothes he wore showed the audience a image of a lonely loser bowing to fate. However, with the efforts of his parents, Nezha wore a red cloak saved the people of Chentangguan, bravely challenged the destiny, and finally realized the sublimation of his own value and won the respect of the people.

Ao Bing's first appearance in the film gave people the impression of handsome, kind-hearted, and calm in situations. He got the Spirit Pearl fortunately, the other half of the powerful Chaos Pearl, which symbolizes goodness, but unfortunately, he failed to have a warm family like Nezha. From beginning to end, he was regarded as a tool of revival of dragon tribe, bore the honor and future of the entire family. He wore a blue robe and was living in the dark dragon gathering place, his inner loneliness and infinite yearning for freedom and friendship can be seen clearly. When his dragon identity was revealed, he could have chosen to sacrifice the people of Chentangguan to protect himself, but his kind heart calmed him down and finally saved the people of Chentangguan at the expense of himself.

IV. Color Promotes Narrative Development and Highlights Film Tension

Ne Zha uses color changes to promote the development of narrative, creating a relaxed tension for the film's emotional changes, allowing the audience to well integrate their emotions into the film when watching.

The overall tone of the color can be used to express the main idea of the film and the subjective creative feeling of the creator. To a certain extent, the expression of the theme of a film will be related to its overall tone. The tone treatment of *Ne Zha* focuses on large-scale warm colors to show the audience a kind of resistance not to yield to fate, which well reveals the theme of Nezha's struggle in the film "I'm the master of my destiny. I'll be the one who decides." At the same time, the film also uses the natural harmony changes of colors to show the audience the process of Nezha's mentality change, which promotes the further development of the film's plot and promotes the film's narrative.

The film attracts the audience's attention by adjusting the brightness and purity of the same color, thereby promoting the development of the film's narrative. *Ne Zha* achieve the goal that portray the psychological changes of characters by adjusting the purity of the colors. whether the dark red of Nezha when he defeats devil and kills monsters for the people of Chentangguan but not accepted by them, or the dark blue of Ao bing when his dragon identity was revealed, all came from the basis of the original color, which deepened the audience's aesthetic attention. Let the audience understand that the transformation of the character's personality is a slow

process, which makes the picture harmonious and unified, and also plays an indispensable role in the connection between the front and the back plot.

The colors in animated film can stimulate the human visual perception system and combine with the theoretical support of rich life experience to form an impressive visual experience, allowing the audience to truly accept what they see from the depths of their hearts and understand the emotion and psychological will of the characters in the film, this is also known as “empathy”. Color can show the audience two different time and space environments where the characters in the play are located, one is real time and space, and the other is imaginary time and space, and the two time and space will not conflict, realizing the seamless connection of space conversion. In *Ne Zha*, red and other realistic colors construct a real world, which truly shows the lives of the people and the encounters of Nezha and Ao Bing; the application of Chinese ink freehand colors makes Nezha calm down, which also reduces the audience’s nervous watching mood and increases the audience’s greater imagination.

Animated film generally uses realistic colors to express the plot, and the realistic colors in *Ne Zha* mainly promote the development of the event. Red is the most used color in this film. The red at the beginning of the film is Nezha’s coming to the world that should have brought endless joy to Chentangguan, but because of Shen Gongbao’s troubles, the joy has become an endless trouble. Nezha was not understood by the people of Chentangguan because of his identity as a Demon Orb. No matter what he did, he could not be accepted by the Chentangguan people. Nezha became self-defeating, the saturation of red became lower, and the overall color was almost gray, giving people a feeling of depression, so that the audience can experience *Ne Zha*’s gloomy psychology that can’t be understood, and lay a solid foundation for *Ne Zha*’s giving himself up. At the end of the film, Nezha stepped on the hot wheels and appeared in front of the people of Chentangguan in a red cloak. At this time, Nezha was like a hero, sheltering the people of Chentangguan from wind and rain. The red color became a witness that Nezha come out of the shadow not accepted by the people, and grow into a hero who dares to challenge his destiny.

Chinese animated film not only use the well-known realistic color to narrative, but also apply traditional Chinese ink freehand techniques based on realistic colors, using negative space to increase the audience’s imagination and create a beautiful artistic conception. The use of freehand color in *Ne Zha* is mainly reflected in the use of Chinese ink painting in the Jiangshan Sheji Map, which increases the imagination of the film, eases the tense rhythm of the film, and enhances the emotional express in the narrative process of the film, reflects the efforts made by his parents and master to make him be accepted by the people of Chentangguan during the period when Nezha was not understood by the people. The addition of this freehand ink and wash color dilutes Nezha’s anger that is not understood by the people, increases more emotional expressions, makes the relationship easing which original with sharp contradictions and tense oppositions, and also provides more possibilities for Nezha’s transformation of mind and nature. As a unique color creation thought in China, freehand brushwork can not only make the audience feel the deep affection, but also understand the broad and profound of Chinese culture, so that the audience can be more impressed by the beautiful poetry scenes of the film.

V. Conclusion

Ne Zha as an excellent Chinese animated film, has conquered a wide audience with its unique artistic charm. Through the above analysis, the importance of color narration in animated film is fully explained. Animation color is different from other art forms. It is designed by creators along with the development and changes of the story. The purpose is to help the film create atmospheres and highlight themes. Color can trigger people's emotional associations under certain conditions, and creators can also use the color of the picture to draw viewers' inner emotions. In an animated film, if there is no color, it is as if there is no soul. It cannot be narrated perfectly, cannot produce the visual beauty of the picture, and cannot show the visual shock it should be. It is precisely because of the addition of color that the visual sense of the picture will be enhanced, the character image will become full, and the plot will become coherent. *Ne Zha* inherits the traditional Chinese ink painting in color processing, draws on the true color display of Western paintings, and adds the creator's unique artistic conception to increase the visual beauty and appeal of the film, creating a classic visual feast for the audience.

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